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# ORATORY AND ORATORS.

BY

WILLIAM MATHEWS, LL.D.,

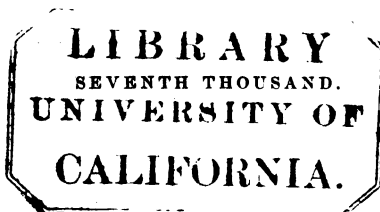
AUTHOR OF "GETTING ON IN THE WORLD." "THE GREAT CONVERSERS,"  
"WORDS; THEIR USE AND ABUSE," ETC. ETC.

L'éloquence est le talent d'imprimer avec force, et de faire passer avec rapidité, dans l'ame des autres le sentiment profond dont on est pénétré.

D'ALEMBERT.

Criticism is nearly useless, unless the critic quotes innumerable examples.

DAVID HUME.



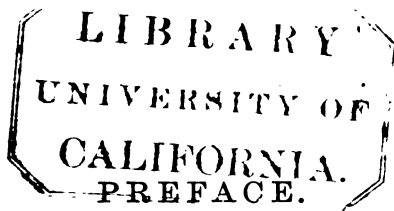
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IN saying that his object in writing this book has been to aid in awakening a fresh interest in oratory in this country, the author will probably provoke a smile from his readers. "What!" he hears some one exclaim, "have we not an excess of public speakers already? Is not the *flux de bouche*,—which is said to be the epidemic of republics,—one of the greatest evils that can afflict a country? Does not Carlyle declare that 'silence is the eternal duty of man,' and that 'England and America are going to nothing but wind and tongue'?" In reply, we would say that we have no wish to let loose a fresh troop of shallow declaimers upon the country; on the contrary, we feel intensely the social misery which a single declaimer, with a powerful memory, leathern lungs, and a fluent tongue, may inflict on the public. The Roman poet, Horace, speaks of one Novius, an office-holder at Rome,—a tribune,—who was elevated to the station he held, chiefly by the force of his lungs. "Has he not a voice," demanded his supporters, "loud enough to drown the noise of two hundred wagons and three funerals meeting in the forum? It is this that pleases us, and we have therefore made him tribune:

"At hic, si plostra ducenta  
Concurrantque foro tria funera, magna sonabit  
Corrua quod vincatque tubas: saltem tenet hoc nos."

We fear that the United States has more than one Novius who owes his seat in a state legislature, in Con-

gress, or even on the bench, to a similar qualification. But shall we, therefore, conclude that the study of oratory as an art should be discouraged? The very reverse, we think, is the just conclusion.

It is an unpleasant conviction, which we wish the facts did not force upon us, that while there is plenty of "spouting,"—of speaking, if one pleases,—in this country, there is little oratory, and less eloquence. It is for the very reason that the American people are deluged by their public speakers with words,—it is because so many of those who assume to address them from the tribune and the platform remind us so unpleasantly of that bird of the parrot tribe whose tongue is longer than its whole body,—that we would call attention to, and most earnestly emphasize, the value of oratorical studies. It is because our young men do not realize that oratory is the weapon of an athlete, and can never be wielded effectually by an intellectual and moral weakling,—because our colleges unintentionally give currency to this idea by devoting so insignificant a portion of time to exercises in elocution,—that so many persons are ready to afflict the public with "mouthfuls of spoken wind." It is because they consciously or unconsciously hold the pestilent notion that the finest productions of the mind are the fruits of sudden inspiration, the chance visitations of a fortunate moment, the flashings of intuition, that they are ready to mount the rostrum at the slightest provocation and without any serious preparation. Let them once learn and deeply feel that the most infallible sign of genius is a prodigious capacity for hard work, and an intense conviction of its necessity; that no man ever has, or ever can be, a true orator without a long and severe apprenticeship to the art; that it not only demands constant, patient, daily practice in speaking and reading, but

a sedulous culture of the memory, the judgment and the fancy,—a ceaseless storing of the cells of the brain with the treasures of literature, history, and science, for its use,—that one might as well expect literally to command the lightnings of the tempest without philosophy, as without philosophy to wield the lightnings of eloquence,—and they will shrink from haranguing their fellow-men, except after a careful training and the most conscientious preparation. So far is it from being true that, if elocution and style were cultivated more, a torrent of empty declamation would be let loose upon the world, that we are confident the very opposite would be the result. Study and high appreciation of an art, by improving the taste, increase fastidiousness; and hence they are calculated to check, rather than to increase, loquacity.

Owing to the vast abundance of the materials, the preparation of this work, whatever its shortcomings, has been no easy task. Several chapters written for it, including one on Military Eloquence, and sketches of a number of orators (Curran, Sheil, Macaulay, Fisher Ames, and William Wirt), have been excluded, to avoid making the volume too bulky. For the same and other reasons, only incidental notices have been given of living orators. It was the author's intention to give a list of the works he had consulted; but they are so numerous that he must content himself with a general acknowledgment of his indebtedness to nearly all the writers on oratory,—for there are few good ones, he believes, whom he has neglected to examine. Especially, would he acknowledge his obligations to various articles on the subject in the leading English reviews and the "North American Review," and to several anonymous writers in magazines, by whose suggestions he has profited. For some interesting facts

concerning American orators, he is indebted to Mr. E. G. Parker's work on the "Golden Age of American Oratory." That it will be easy for a logician to point out apparent contradictions in these pages the author is aware; but he believes it will be found that, as was said of another writer, the latchet of whose shoes he is not worthy to unloose, that these seeming contradictions are, in fact, only successive presentations of single sides of a truth, which, by their union, manifest completely to us its existence, and guide us to a perception of its nature. "No good writer," says Dr. Bushnell, "who is occupied in simply expressing truth, is ever afraid of contradictions or inconsistencies in his language. It is nothing to him that a quirk of logic can bring him into an absurdity. There is no book that contains so many repugnances, or antagonistic forms, as the Bible." \*

Finally, to all persons interested in the subject here discussed, and who do not believe with the author of "Lacon" that "oratory is the puffing and blustering spoilt child of a semi-barbarous age," or with General Grant, that the art of speech-making is one of little use, but agree with Luther that "he who can speak well is a man," and with Cicero that it is most glorious to excel men in that in which men excel all other animals, this work is inscribed.

\* "God in Christ," pp. 57, 69.

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ORATORY AND ORATORS.

CHAPTER I.

THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THE ORATOR.

**T**O estimate the degree in which the orator has influenced the world's history, would be a difficult task. It would be hardly too much to say that, since the dawn of civilization, the triumphs of the tongue have rivalled, if not surpassed, those of the sword. There is hardly any man, illiterate or educated, so destitute of sensibility that he is not charmed by the music of eloquent speech, even though it affect his senses rather than his mind and heart, and rouse his blood only as it is roused by the drums and trumpets of military bands. But when eloquence is something more than a trick of art, or a juggle with words; when it has a higher aim than to tickle the ear, or to charm the imagination as the sparkling eye and dazzling scales of the serpent enchant the hovering bird; when it has a higher inspiration than that which produces the "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal" of merely fascinating speech; when it is armed with the thunderbolt of powerful thought, and winged with lofty feeling; when the electric current of sympathy is established, and the orator sends upon it thrill after thrill of sentiment and emotion, vibrating ~~and~~ pulsating to the sensibilities of his hearers, as if their very heart-strings



were held in the grasp of his trembling fingers; when it strips those to whom it is addressed of their independence, invests them with its own life, and makes them obedient to a strange nature, as the mighty ocean tides follow the path of the moon; when it divests men of their peculiar qualities and affections, and turns a vast multitude into one man, giving to them but one heart, one pulse, and one voice, and that an echo of the speaker's,—then, indeed, it becomes not only a delight, but a power, and a power greater than kings or military chieftains can command.

The French philosopher, D'Alembert, goes so far as to say of eloquence, that "the prodigies which it often works, in the hands of a single man, upon an entire nation, are perhaps the most shining testimony of the superiority of one man over another"; and Emerson expresses a similar opinion when he says that eloquence is "the appropriate organ of the highest personal energy." As there is no effort of the human mind which demands a rarer combination of faculties than does oratory in its loftiest flights, so there is no human effort which is rewarded with more immediate or more dazzling triumphs. The philosopher in his closet, the statesman in his cabinet, the general in the tented field, may produce more lasting effects upon human affairs, but their influence is both more slowly felt, and less intoxicating from the ascendancy it confers. The orator is not compelled to wait through long and weary years to reap the reward of his labors. His triumphs are instantaneous; they follow his efforts as the thunder-peal follows the lightning's flash. While he is in the very act of forming his sentences, his triumph is reflected from the countenances of his hearers,

and is sounded from their lips. To stand up before a vast assembly composed of men of the most various callings, views, passions, and prejudices, and mould them at will; to play upon their hearts and minds as a master upon the keys of a piano; to convince their understandings by the logic, and to thrill their feelings by the art, of the orator; to see every eye watching his face, and every ear intent on the words that drop from his lips; to see indifference changed to breathless interest, and aversion to rapturous enthusiasm; to hear thunders of applause at the close of every period; to see the whole assembly animated by the feelings which in him are burning and struggling for utterance; and to think that all this is the creation of the moment, and has sprung instantaneously from his fiery brain and the inspiration imparted to it by the circumstances of the hour;—*this*, perhaps, is the greatest triumph of which the human mind is capable, and that in which its divinity is most signally revealed. //

The history of every country and of every age teems with the miracles wrought by this necromantic power. Eloquence, as every school-boy knows, was the master-spirit of both the great nations of antiquity,—Greece and Rome. It was not the fleets of Attica, though mighty, nor the valor of her troops, though unconquerable, that directed her destinies, but the words and gestures of the men who had the genius and the skill to move, to concentrate, and to direct the energies and passions of a whole people, as though they were but one person. When the Commons of Rome were bowed down to the dust beneath the load of debts which they owed their patrician creditors, it was the agonizing appeals of an old man in rags, pale

and famishing, with haggard beard and hair, who told the citizens that he had fought in eight and twenty battles, and yet had been imprisoned for a debt with usurious interest which he was compelled to contract, but could not pay, that caused a change of the laws, and a restoration to liberty of those who had been enslaved by their creditors. It was not, as it has been well said, the fate of Lucretia, but the gesture of Brutus waving abroad her bloody knife, and his long hidden soul bursting forth in terrible denunciation, that drove out the Tarquin from Rome, overthrew the throne, and established the Republic. "It was a father's cries and prayers for vengeance, as he rushed from the dead body of Virginia, appealing to his countrymen, that roused the legions of the Tusculan camp to seize upon the Sacred Mount, and achieve another freedom. And when the Roman Empire was the world, and trophies from every people hung in her capitol, the orator, whether in the senate or in the comitia, shook oracles of the fate of nations from the folds of his mantle." Plutarch tells us that Thucydides, when Archidamus, King of Sparta, asked him which was the best wrestler, Pericles or he,—replied: "When I throw him, he says he was never down, and persuades the very spectators to believe him." The Athenian populace, roused by the burning words of Demosthenes, started up with one accord and one cry to march upon Philip; and the Macedonian monarch said of the orator who had baffled him,—on hearing a report of one of his orations,—"Had I been there, he would have persuaded me to take up arms against myself." We are told that such was the force of Cicero's oratory, that it not only confounded the audacious Cataline, and silenced the eloquent Hortensius,—not only deprived Curio of all

power of recollection, when he rose to oppose that great master of enchanting rhetoric,—but made even Cæsar tremble, and, changing his determined purpose, acquit the man he had resolved to condemn. It was not till the two champions of ancient liberty, Demosthenes and Cicero, were silenced, that the triumph of Despotism in Greece and Rome was complete. The fatal blow to Athenian greatness was the defeat by Antipater which drove Demosthenes to exile and to death; the deadly stroke at Roman freedom was that which smote off the head of Tully at Caieta.

In the Dark Ages the earnest tones of a simple private man, who has left to posterity only his baptismal name, with the modest surname of Hermit, roused the nations to engage in the Crusades, drove back the victorious crescent, overthrew feudalism, emancipated the serfs, delivered the towns from the oppression of the barons, and changed the moral face of Europe. Two centuries later the voice of a solitary monk shook the Vatican, and emancipated half of Europe from the dominion of Papal Rome. In later ages the achievements of oratory have been hardly less potent. What reader of English history is not familiar with the story of that “lord of the silver bow,” the accomplished Bolingbroke, whom the Ministry, when they permitted him to return from exile, dared not permit to reënter Parliament, lest they should be pierced by his deadly shafts? Who can say what the cause of European, or even the world’s history would have been, had the British Senate never shaken with the thunders of Fox’s, Camden’s, or Grattan’s eloquence, or had Mirabeau, Vergniaud, Louvet, Barbaroux, and Danton never hurled their fiery bolts from the French tribune? “Who can doubt,” says Daniel Webster, “that in our own struggle for inde-

pendence, the majestic eloquence of Chatham, the profound reasoning of Burke, the burning satire and irony of Barré, had influence on our fortunes in America? They tended to diminish the confidence of the British ministry in their hopes to subject us. There was not a reading man who did not struggle more boldly for his rights when those exhilarating sounds, uttered in the two houses of Parliament, reached him across the seas." To the effects wrought by "the fulminating eloquence" of the first of these great orators, history has borne abundant testimony. The arbiter of the destinies of his own country, he was also the foremost man in all the world. "His august mind overawed majesty. . . . Without dividing, he destroyed party; without corrupting, he made a venal age unanimous; France sunk beneath him; with one hand he smote the House of Bourbon, and wielded in the other the democracy of England."

We are told that when Mirabeau arose in the National Assembly, and delivered one of those fiery speeches which, in their union of reason and passion, so remind us of Demosthenes, he trod the tribune with the supreme authority of a master, and the imperial air of a king. As he proceeded with his harangue, his frame dilated; his face was wrinkled and contorted; he roared, he stamped; his hair whitened with foam; his whole system was seized with an electric irritability, and writhed as under an almost preternatural agitation. The effect of his eloquence, which was of the grandest and most impressive kind, abounding in bold images, striking metaphors, and sudden natural bursts, the creation of the moment, was greatly increased by his "hideously magnificent aspect,"—the massive frame, the features full of pock-holes and

the calumny. The House which for two hours before seemed about to yield to the great agitator, was now almost ready to tear him to pieces. In the midst of the storm which his eloquence had raised, he (Lord Stanley) sat down, having achieved one of the greatest triumphs of eloquence ever won in a popular assembly by the powers of oratory."

In our own country the triumphs of eloquence have been hardly less marked than those of the Old World. In the night of tyranny the eloquence of the country first blazed up, like the lighted signal-fires of a distracted border, to startle and enlighten the community. Everywhere, as the news of some fresh invasion of liberty and right was borne on the wings of the wind, men ran together and called upon some earnest citizen to address them. The eloquence of that period was not the mere ebullition of feeling; it was the enthusiasm of reason; it was judgment raised into transport, and breathing the irresistible ardors of sympathy.

When in 1761 James Otis, in a Boston popular assembly, denounced the British Writs of Assistance, his hearers were hurried away resistlessly on the torrent of his impetuous speech. When he had concluded, every man, we are told, of the vast audience went away resolved to take up arms against the illegality. When Patrick Henry pleaded the tobacco case "against the parsons" in 1758, it is said that the people might have been seen in every part of the house, on the benches, in the aisles, and in the windows, hushed in death-like stillness, and bending eagerly forward to catch the magic tones of the speaker. The jury were so bewildered as to lose sight of the legislative enactments on which the plaintiffs relied; the court lost the

equipoise of its judgment, and refused a new trial; and the people, who could scarcely keep their hands off their champion after he had closed his harangue, no sooner saw that he was victorious, than they seized him at the bar, and, in spite of his own efforts, and the continued cry of "Order!" from the sheriff and the court, bore him out of the court-house, and, raising him on their shoulders, carried him about the yard in a kind of electioneering triumph. When the same great orator concluded his well-known speech in March, 1775, in behalf of American independence, "no murmur of applause followed," says his biographer; "the effect was too deep. After the trance of a moment, several members of the Assembly started from their seats. The cry, *To arms!* seemed to quiver on every lip and glance from every eye."—Mr. Jefferson, who drew up the Declaration of Independence, declares that John Adams, its ablest advocate on the floor of Congress, poured forth his passionate appeals in language "which moved his hearers from their seats."

There are few school-boys who are not familiar with the famous passage in the great speech of Fisher Ames on the British Treaty, in which he depicts the horrors of the border war with the Indians, which would result from its rejection. Even when we read these glowing periods to-day in cold blood, without the tremulous and thrilling accents of the dying statesman, that made them so impressive, we feel the "fine frenzy" of the speaker in every line. An old man, a judge in Maine, who heard the burning words of Ames, declared that as he closed with the climax, "The darkness of midnight will glitter with the blaze of your dwellings. You are a father,—the blood of your sons shall fatten your corn-field: you are a mother,—

the war-whoop shall wake the sleep of the cradle,"—the prophecy seemed for a moment a reality. "I shuddered and looked a little behind me; for I fancied a big Indian with an uplifted tomahawk over me."

William Wirt, himself an orator, tells us that when the "Blind Preacher of Virginia" drew a picture of the trial, crucifixion, and death of our Savior, there was such force and pathos in the description that the original scene appeared to be, at that moment, acting before the hearers' eyes. "We saw the very faces of the Jews: the staring, frightful distortions of malice and rage. We saw the buffet; my soul kindled with a flame of indignation; and my hands were involuntarily and convulsively clinched." But when, with faltering voice, he came to touch on the patience, the forgiving meekness of the Savior, his prayer for pardon of his enemies, "the effect was inconceivable. The whole house resounded with the mingled groans, and sobs, and shrieks of the congregation."

The accounts given of the effects wrought by some of Daniel Webster's speeches, seem almost incredible to those who never have listened to his clarion-like voice and weighty words. Yet even now, as we read some of the stirring passages in his early discourses, we can hardly realize that we are not standing by as he strangles the *reluctantes dracones* of an adversary, or actually looking upon the scenes in American history which he so vividly describes. Prof. Ticknor, speaking in one of his letters of the intense excitement with which he listened to Webster's Plymouth Address, says: "Three or four times I thought my temples would burst with the gush of blood; for, after all, you must know that I am aware it is no connected and compacted whole, but a collection of won-



derful fragments of burning eloquence, to which his manner gave tenfold force. When I came out, *I was almost afraid to come near to him.* It seemed to me that he was like the mount that might not be touched, and that burned with fire."

As it was the eloquence of Hamilton, spoken and written, which, in no small degree, established our political system, so it was the eloquence of Webster that mainly defended and saved it:—

" Duo fulmina belli,  
Scipiadas, cladem Libyæ."

When the Federal Constitution, the product of so much sacrifice and toil, was menaced by the Nullifiers of South Carolina, it was the great orator of Massachusetts that sprang to its rescue. As the champion of New England closed the memorable peroration of his reply to Hayne, the silence of death rested upon the crowded Senate Chamber. Hands remained clasped, faces fixed and rigid, and eyes tearful, while the sharp rap of the President's hammer could hardly awaken the audience from the trance into which the orator had thrown them. When, again, over thirty years later, Nullification once more raised its front, and stood forth armed for a long and desperate conflict, it was the ignited logic of the same Defender of the Constitution,—the burning and enthusiastic appeals for "*Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable,*"—which, still echoing in the memories of the people, roused them as by a bugle-blast to resistance. It was because Webster, when living, had indoctrinated the whole North with his views of the structure of our government, that, when his bones lay mouldering at Marshfield, the whole North was ready to

fight as one man against the heresy of Secession. The idol of the American youth, at the stage of their culture when eloquence exerts its most powerful fascination, he had infused into their hearts such a sentiment of nationality, that they sprang to arms with a determination to shed the last drop of their blood, rather than see a single star effaced from the ample folds of the national flag. Who has forgotten the potent enchantment worked by the same voice in Faneuil Hall, after the odious Compromise Act of 1850? The orator who had been adored as "godlike," and whose appearance had been a signal for a universal outburst of enthusiasm,—the orator upon whom New England had been proud to lavish its honors, was now received with frowning looks and sullen indignation; yet "never," says the poet Lowell, "did we encounter a harder task than to escape the fascination of that magnetic presence of the man, which worked so potently to charm the mind from a judicial serenity to an admiring enthusiasm. There he stood, the lion at bay; and that one man, with his ponderous forehead, his sharp, cliff-edged brows, his brooding, thunderous eyes, his Mirabeau mane of hair, and all the other nameless attributes of his lion-like port, seemed enough to overbalance and outweigh that great multitude of men, who came as accusers, but remained, so to speak, as captives, swayed to and fro by his aroused energy as the facile grain is turned hither and thither in mimic surges by the strong wind that runs before the thundergust."

~~With the triumphs of sacred oratory it would be easy to fill a volume. Not to go back to the days of John the Baptist, or to those of Paul and Peter, whose words are the very flame-breath of the Almighty,—nor even to~~

the days of Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed, who, when, like another Elijah, or John the Baptist risen from the dead, he reappeared among his townsmen of Antioch, after the austerities in the desert to which his disgust at their licentiousness had driven him, denounced their bacchanalian orgies in words that made their cheeks tingle, and sent them panic-stricken to their homes,—who is not familiar with the miracles which christian eloquence has wrought in modern times? Who has forgotten the story of “the priest, patriot, martyr,” Savonarola, crying evermore to the people of Florence, “Heu! fuge crudelas terras, fuge littus avarum!” Who is ignorant of the mighty changes, ecclesiastic and political, produced by the blunt words of Latimer, the fiery appeals of Wycliffe, the stern denunciations of Knox? Or what ruler of men ever subjugated them more effectually by his sceptre than Chalmers, who gave law from his pulpit for thirty years; who hushed the frivolity of the modern Babylon, and melted the souls of the French philosophers in a half-known tongue; who drew tears from dukes and duchesses, and made princes of the blood and bishops start to their feet, and break out into rounds of the wildest applause?

What cultivated man needs to be told of the sweet persuasion that dwelt upon the tongue of the swan of Cambray, the alternating religious joy and terror inspired by the silvery cadence and polished phrase of Massillon, or the resistless conviction that followed the argumentative strategy of Bourdaloue,—a mode of attack upon error and sin which was so illustrative of the *imperatoria virtus* of Quintilian, that the great Condé cried out once, as the Jesuit mounted the pulpit, “*Silence, Messieurs, voici l’ennemi!*” What schoolboy is not familiar with the

religious terror with which, in his *oraisons funèbres*, the "Demosthenes of the pulpit," Bossuet, thrilled the breasts of *seigneurs* and princesses, and even the breast of that King before whom other kings trembled and knelt, when, taking for his text the words, "Be wise, therefore, O ye kings! be instructed, ye judges of the earth!" he unveiled to his auditors the awful reality of God the Lord of all empires, the chastiser of princes, reigning above the heavens, making and unmaking kingdoms, principalities and powers; or, again, with the fire of a lyric poet and the zeal of a prophet, called on nations, princes, nobles, and warriors, to come to the foot of the catafalque which strove to raise to heaven a magnificent testimony of the nothingness of man? At the beginning of his discourses, the action of "the eagle of Meaux," we are told, was dignified and reserved; he confined himself to the notes before him. Gradually "he warmed with his theme, the contagion of his enthusiasm seized his hearers; he watched their rising emotion; the rooted glances of a thousand eyes filled him with a sort of divine frenzy; his notes became a burden and a hindrance; with impetuous ardor he abandoned himself to the inspiration of the moment; with the eyes of the soul he watched the swelling hearts of his hearers; their concentrated emotions became his own; he felt within himself the collected might of the orators and martyrs whose collected essence, by long and repeated communion, he had absorbed into himself; from flight to flight he ascended, until, with unflagging energy, he towered straight upwards, and dragged the rapt contemplation of his audience along with him in its ethereal flight." At such times, says the Abbé Le Dieu, it seemed as though the heavens were open, and celestial

joys were about to descend upon these trembling souls, like tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost. At other times, heads bowed down with humiliation, or pale upturned faces and streaming eyes, lips parted with broken ejaculations of despair, silently testified that the spirit of repentance had breathed on many a hardened heart.

There is a story told of a French Abbé, that he preached a sermon, on a certain Sunday, of such power that his appalled people went home, put up the shutters of their shops, and for three days gave themselves up to utter despair. Jonathan Edwards, the Calvinistic divine, preached sermons of such force that, under the lash of his fiery denunciation, men cried out in agony, and women rose up in their seats. There have been other preachers who, in moments of general misery, have had equal power of turning the wailing of their people into bursts of thankfulness and joy. "I have heard it reported," says Emerson, "of an eloquent preacher whose voice is not forgotten in this city (Boston), that, on occasions of death or tragic disaster which overspread the congregation with gloom, he ascended the pulpit with more than his usual alacrity, and, turning to his favorite lessons of devout and jubilant thankfulness,—'Let us praise the Lord,'—carried audience, mourners, and mourning along with him, and swept away all the impertinence of private sorrow with his hosannas and songs of praise."

In our own day the triumphs of eloquence, though of a different kind from those of yore, are hardly less signal than in the ages past. We doubt, on the whole, if the orator was ever tempted by brighter laurels, or had a grander field for the exercise of his art. We live in an age of popular agitation, when, in every free country, the

people are becoming more and more the source of all power, and when it is by organized and systematic effort,—by “monster meetings,” and appeals made to the constituencies of the country, rather than to the legislature,—that great political changes are worked out. The germs of great events, the first motive-springs of change, have their origin, no doubt, in the closet, in the brains of men of deep thought and wide observation, who are not engaged in the strife and turmoil of the arena. But the people are the great agency by which all revolutions and changes are accomplished, and the two great engines for convincing and moving the people are oratory and the press. Never before were the masses of the people appealed to so earnestly and systematically as now. The title, “Agitator,” once a term of contempt, has now become one of honor. Look at England! What mighty changes have been wrought in her political system within the last fifty years by the indomitable energy of the Vincents, the Foxes, the Cobdens, and scores of other speakers, who have traversed the kingdom, advocating Parliamentary Reform, the Repeal of the Corn-Laws, and other measures which were once deemed utopian and hopeless! Scotland, too, has hardly yet recovered from a convulsion which shook society to its foundations, produced by the eloquence of a few earnest men, who declared that “conscience should be free.” Who can doubt that, in our own country, it was the vehement and impassioned oratory of the so-called “anti-slavery fanatics,”—the “hare-brained” champions of “the higher law,”—that precipitated the “irrepressible conflict” which broke the fetters of the slave, and thus removed the most formidable obstacle to the complete union of North and South, as well as the foulest stain on our escutcheon?

It is natural to associate the gift of eloquence with a few favored lands, and to imagine, especially, that civilized communities only have felt its influence. But there is no people, except the very lowest savages, to whom it has been denied. There is, doubtless, a vast difference between the voice of an untutored peasant, who never thought of the magic potency dwelling in this faculty, and who, consequently, addresses his fellows in loud and discordant tones, and that of the man who, with an educated mind and a cultivated taste, understands and uses his voice as Handel understood and used the organ; yet there are examples of eloquence in the speeches of Logan and Red Jacket, and other aborigines of America, that will live in the story of that abused race as long as the trees wave in their forests, or the winds sigh among their mountains. Sir Francis Head, in narrating the proceedings of a council of Red Indians which he attended as Governor of Canada, says: "Nothing can be more interesting, or offer to the civilized world a more useful lesson, than the manner in which the red aborigines of America, without ever interrupting each other, conduct their councils. The calm dignity of their demeanor,—the scientific manner in which they progressively construct the framework of whatever subject they undertake to explain,—the sound argument by which they connect, as well as support it,—and the beautiful wild-flowers of eloquence with which they adorn every portion of the moral architecture they are constructing,—form altogether an exhibition of grave interest; and yet these orators are men whose lips and gums are, while they are speaking, black from the berries on which they subsist."

As we conclude this chapter, a sad thought presses itself upon the mind touching that eloquence whose magic

~~effects we have so faintly depicted; it is that it is so perishable. Of all the great products of creative art, it is the only one that does not survive the creator.~~ We read a discourse which is said to have enchanted all who heard it, and how "shrunk and wooden" do we find its image, compared with the conception we had formed! The orator who lashed himself into a foam,—whose speech drove on in a fiery sleet of words and images,—now seems

"Dull as the lake that slumbers in the storm,"

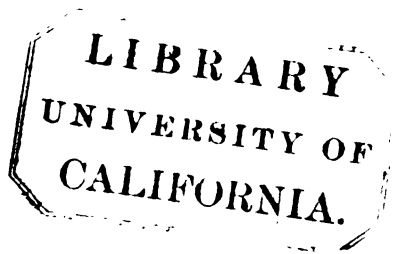
and we can scarcely credit the reports of his frenzy. The picture from the great master's hand may improve with age; every year may add to the mellowness of its tints, the delicacy of its colors. The Cupid of Praxiteles, the Mercury of Thorwaldsen, are as perfect as when they came from the sculptor's chisel. The dome of Saint Peter's, the self-poised roof of King's Chapel, "scooped into ten thousand cells," the façade and sky-piercing spire of Strasbourg Cathedral, are a perpetual memorial of the genius of their builders. Even music, so far as it is a creation of the composer, may live forever. The aria or cavatina may have successive resurrections from its dead signs. The delicious melodies of Schubert, and even Handel's "seven-fold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies," may be reproduced by new artists from age to age. But oratory, in its grandest or most bewitching manifestations,—the *δεινότες* of Demosthenes, contending for the crown,—the white heat of Cicero inveighing against Antony,—the glaring eye and thunder tones of Chatham denouncing the employment of Indians in war,—the winged flame of Curran blasting the pimps and informers that would rob Orr of his life,—the nest of



singing-birds in Prentiss's throat, as he holds spell-bound the thousands in Faneuil Hall,—the look, port, and voice of Webster, as he hurls his thunderbolts at Hayne,—all these can no more be reproduced than the song of the sirens.

The words of a masterpiece of oratorical genius may be caught by the quick ear of the reporter, and jotted down with literal exactness, not a preposition being out of place, not an interjection wanting; but the attitude and the look, the voice and the gesture, are lost forever. As well might you attempt to paint the lightning's flash, as to paint the piercing glance which, for an instant, from the great orator's eyes, darts into your very soul, or to catch the mystic, wizard tones, which now bewitch you with their sweetness, and now storm the very citadel of your mind and senses. Occasionally a great discourse is delivered, which seems to preserve in print some of the chief elements of its power. In reading Bossuet's thrilling sermon on the death of Madame Henriette Anne d'Angleterre, we seem to be almost living in the seventeenth century, and to hear the terrible cry which rings through the halls of Versailles,—“*Madame se meurt! Madame est morte!*” and to see the audience sobbing with veiled faces as the words are pronounced. But, in the vast majority of cases, it is but a *caput mortuum* which the most cunning stenographer can give us of that which, in its utterance, so startled or charmed the hearer. The aroma, the finer essences, have vanished,—only the dead husk remains. Again, eloquence, as Pitt said, “is in the assembly,” and therefore to appreciate a discourse, we must not only have heard it as delivered, but when and where it was delivered, with all its accom-

paniments, and with the temper of those to whom it was addressed. We need the "fiery life of the moment," the contagion of the great audience, the infectious enthusiasm leaping from heart to heart, the shouting thousands in the echoing minster or senate. We need to see and to hear the magician with his wand in his hand, and on the theatre of his spells. The country preacher, therefore, was right, who, when he had electrified his people by an extempore discourse preached during a thunder-storm, and was asked to let them print it, replied that he would do so if they would print the thunder-storm along with it.



## CHAPTER II.

### IS ORATORY A LOST ART?

IN the last chapter we expressed the opinion that the triumphs of eloquence in our own day, though of a different kind from those of yore, are not less signal than in the ages past. We are aware that many persons in England and America,—especially the croakers, *laudatores temporis acti*, and believers in the fabled “golden ages” of excellence,—will deny this statement. Talk to them of the eloquent tongues of the present day,—tell them how you have been thrilled by the music of Gladstone’s or Everett’s periods, or startled by the thunderbolts of Webster, Brougham, or Bright,—and they will tell you, with a sigh, that the oratory of their predecessors was grander and more impressive. The golden age of oratory, they say, has gone, and the age of iron has succeeded. It is an era of tare and tret, of buying and selling, of quick returns and small profits, and we have no time or taste for fine phrases. If we have perfected the steam-engine, and invented the electric telegraph and the phonograph, we have also enthroned a sordid, crouching, mammon-worshipping spirit in high places; we have deified dullness, and idolized cotton-spinning and knife-grinding, till oratory, which always mirrors the age, has become timid and formal, dull and decorous, never daring or caring to soar in eagle flights, but content to creep on the ground, and “dwell in decencies forever.” Hence we have no masterpieces of

eloquence to-day like those with which Demosthenes, or Chatham, or Mirabeau, awed and overwhelmed their hearers. We have no speeches of marrow and pith, abounding in great truths felicitously expressed, terse, epigrammatic sentences, that stick like barbed arrows in the memory, and magnificent metaphors which only genius can coin. We have plenty of able debaters, but no real orators,—no men “on whose tongue the fiery touch of eloquence has been laid, whose lips the Attic bees have stung with intensity and power.” Go to the home of oratory, France, and you will hear the same melancholy plaint. A late French writer, mourning over the decay of eloquence in his native land, declares that the present Chambers are but so many little chapels, where each one places his own image upon the altar, chants magnificats, and pays adoration to himself. The deputies, devoured with the leprosy of political materialism, are but manikins, not men. Deputies of a parish or a fraternity; deputies of a harbor, of a railroad, of a canal, of a vineyard; deputies of sugar-cane or beet-root; deputies of oil or of bitumen; deputies of charcoal, of salt, of iron, of flax; deputies of bovine, equine, asinine interests,—in short, of everything except of France, they represent but obsolete opinions, and are never heard of beyond the range of their own voice.\*

In every age we hear these doleful Jeremiads; evermore the cry of the present is, “there were giants in *those* days.” We are all more or less the victims of that illusion which leads men to idealize and idolize the past. It seems almost impossible for a man who has reached fifty to escape that senile querulousness which leads one to magnify the merits of dead actors and singers, sculptors and painters, and

\* “The Orators of France.”

other artists of lang syne. "Memory's geese are always swans." We all fancy with the old Count in *Gil Blas*, that the peaches were much larger when we were boys. Burke, who, we think, lived in an age of giants, spoke of it as an age of comparative dwarfs. There are persons who go even farther than the victims of this hereditary illusion; who not only claim for the orators of past centuries,—and especially for those of Greece and Rome,—an immeasurable superiority over those of the present age, but do not hesitate even to assert that oratory is now almost a lost art. The age of great orators, they say, has gone by, and such have been the changes in society, and in the modes of influencing public opinion, that the Cicero or Demosthenes of antiquity is no more likely to return than the rhapsodist of early Greece or the Troubadour of romance. Just as the improved artillery, the revolver, and the repeating rifle, have rendered swords, sabres, and bayonets cumbrous and useless, so the old-fashioned formal harangues of the British and American senates have given way to the brief, business-like speeches of modern times.

That many plausible reasons may be urged for this belief, we are ready to admit. Oratory, like satire, is fed by the vices and misfortunes of society. Long periods of peace and prosperity, which quicken the growth of other arts, are in some respects fatal to it. Its element is the whirlwind and the storm; and when society is upheaved to its foundations, when the moral and political darkness is thickest, it shines forth with the greatest splendor. As the science of medicine would be useless among a people free from disease, so if there were a Utopia in the world free from crimes and disputes, from commotions and disturbances, there would be no demand for oratory. As

Tacitus, (or whoever else was the author of the dialogue on the "Corruptions of Oratory,") has observed, peace, no doubt, is preferable to war, but it is the latter only that forms the soldier. "It is just the same with eloquence; the oftener she enters, if I may so say, the field of battle; the more wounds she gives and receives; the more powerful the adversary with which she contends,—so much the more ennobled she appears in the eye of mankind."

It is a significant coincidence that the period when Athenian oratory was at its height was the period when the Athenian character and the Athenian empire were sunk to the lowest point of degradation. Before the Persian wars, and while she was achieving those victories which have made the world ring with her name, the eloquence of Athens was in its infancy. At length the crisis came. Disunion crept into her councils; her provinces revolted; her tributaries insulted her; her fleets, which had won such dazzling triumphs over the barbarians, fled before the enemy; her armies, which had so long been invincible, pined in the quarries of Syracuse, or fed the vultures of Ægospotami; the sceptre passed from her hand, and the sons of the heroes who fought at Marathon were forced to bow to the yoke of a Macedonian king. It was now, when the sun of her material prosperity was setting,—when her moral, political, and military character was most degraded,—when the viceroy of a foreign despot was giving law to her people, and she was draining the cup of suffering to its very dregs,—that was seen the splendid dawn of an eloquence such as the world never since has known.

The history of Roman eloquence differs in no essential

particular from that of Greece. It was not in the days of the Scipios, of Cincinnatus, and of the Gracchi, that Cicero thundered and Hortensius flashed. It was when "the Eternal City" was convulsed by dissensions, and torn by faction; when the plebeians were arrayed against the patricians, and the patricians against the plebeians, when demagogues and assassins overawed the courts, and the magistrates despaired of the public safety,—that were heard the accents of that oratory which has linked the name of Cicero with that of the conqueror of Æschines. It was out of the crimes of Catiline, and the outrages of Verres and Mark Antony, that sprang the loftiest eloquence that shook the Roman Senate, as it was the galling tyranny of Philip that set on fire the genius of Demosthenes. X

Again, besides the revolutionary atmosphere, there was another circumstance which in the ancient states stimulated the growth of eloquence,—namely, the simplicity of public business, as compared with its vast extent, complexity, and fullness of details, in modern times. Living, in the days of their luxury, by the spoliation of foreign states, instead of by the labor of their own hands, the citizens had leisure for the consideration of public questions, which were generally of the simplest kind. Peace or war, vengeance for public wrongs, or mercy to prostrate submission, national honor and national gratitude,—topics appealing to the primal sensibilities of man,—were, as De Quincey has observed, the themes of Greek and Roman oratory. The speeches of Demosthenes and the other great orators of antiquity were the expressions of intense minds on subjects of the deepest moment, and therefore the distinguishing feature of their oratory was vehemence. Speaking on questions upon whose decision

hung the very existence of his country, the orator could not be expected to speak temperately; he could not believe that there were two sides to the question, and that conflicting views were equally reconcilable with patriotism in those who held them. To-day the circumstances in which the parliamentary orator is placed are entirely different. The legislative assemblies are deliberative bodies, that have grave and weighty business interests to deal with, and hard practical knots to untie. Nineteen-twentieths of the business that comes before them is of a kind that affords no scope for eloquence. The multiplicity and detail of modern affairs, abounding in particulars and petty items, tend to stifle and suffocate it.

Go into the British Parliament or the American Congress, and the theme of debate will be,—what? In all probability a road or a bridge bill, a bill to demonetize or to remonetize silver, a bill to subsidize a steamship or railway corporation, or to establish a new post-route. A man who should discuss these questions as if they were questions of life and death, would only make himself a laughing-stock. Even in Queen Caroline's case the House of Lords barely refrained from laughing, when Brougham knelt to beseech the peers. The great majority of the questions that now come up for decision by our political assemblies turn on masses of fact, antecedents in blue-books, tabulated statistics, which all necessitate not only elaborate inquiries, but differences of opinion after the inquiries. The Demosthenic vehemence is, therefore, out of place. Ingenuity and skill, a happy facility of dealing with tangled and complicated facts, judgment, quickness, tact,—and, along with these, the calm, didactic exposition, the clear, luminous statement, a treatment



nearly like that of the lecturer,—are more efficacious than the “sound and fury” of the ancient orator. The modern speaker feels that on points of detail it would be ridiculous to be in a passion,—that on matters of business it would be absurd to be enthusiastic; and hence, except on rare occasions, he deals in facts rather than in fancies, in figures of arithmetic rather than in figures of speech, in pounds, shillings, and pence, rather than in poetry. It was the opinion of Rufus Choate that even Clay and Webster, as they did not live in a revolutionary age, missed the greatest agony of eloquence. As ancient conversation was more or less oratorical, so modern oratory is more or less conversational in its tone. The cold, calculating, commercial spirit of the age jeers at fine speaking, and the shrewd speaker, therefore, suggests rather than elaborates, talks rather than declaims. The light touch of Peel, Palmerston, or Wendell Phillips, is more effective than the rounded periods of the formal rhetorician.

The same difference extends to forensic eloquence. Mr. Forsyth, the author of “Hortensius,” has justly ascribed its decay in England to the excessive technicality which pervades the law. Nothing can be more fatal to eloquence than attention to the fine and hair-splitting distinctions which subtle pleaders delight to raise and pettifoggers to maintain, and to which the courts of justice, both in Great Britain and the United States, are too prone to lend a ready ear. The overgrown mass, the huge, unwieldy body of the law at the present day, is another impediment to oratory, hardly less formidable. How can a man be eloquent whose best days and hours are spent in learning and digesting the enormous mass

of statutes, with the myriad decisions upon them, which now fill the thousand volumes upon his shelves? Talents of a popular kind, the power of giving effect to large and comprehensive views, wither under such a treatment as this. The modern lawyer has no time to gather the flowers of Parnassus. All the fire, energy, and enthusiasm of a young man with noble impulses,—all his native genius and acquired abilities,—die within him, overlaid and smothered by the forms and technicalities of a narrow, crabbed, and barbarous legal system.

On the other hand, Greek and Roman pleadings, instead of relating to technicalities, to the construction of a statute, or to facts of an intricate and perplexing nature, were occupied with questions of elementary justice, large and diffusive, which even the uninstructed could understand, and which connected themselves at every step with powerful and tempestuous feelings. The judges, instead of being the mere interpreters of the law, were also legislators. Instead of being thwarted by the cold vigilance of justice or the restraining formalities of practice,—instead of being hampered by codes, or obstructed by precedents,—the pleader appealed boldly to the passions and prejudices of his hearers. To obtain a verdict of guilt or innocence, by invective or by exaggeration, by appeals to public expediency or by appeals to private hate, was the only end which he proposed to himself. It was the universal right of accusation, that species of magistracy with which each citizen was clothed for the protection of the common liberty, that produced under the Cæsars those infamous denunciations, that lucrative and sanguinary eloquence, *lucrosam et sanguinolentam eloquentiam*, of which Tacitus speaks.

In all the precepts given by the ancient orators there is supposed a violent, partial, unjust, and corrupt magistrate who is to be won. A thousand scenes of tumult intermingled incessantly with the solemnities of justice. The forms and the place in which justice was administered; the character of the accusations, so often of a political nature; the presence of the opposed parties; the throng of people present,—all excited and inspired the orator. A modern court-room has little resemblance to that public place in which were pronounced the decrees that abolished the royalties of Asia, where the honors of Rome were conferred, where laws were proposed and abrogated, and which was also the theatre of the great judicial debates. The objective genius of antiquity, it has been well said, is nowhere more vividly illustrated than in its legal proceedings. “The contrast between the formalities of the Old Bailey or Westminster Hall and those of the Areopagus or the Forum, could, if mutually witnessed, have produced in their respective audiences nothing but mutual repulsion. An Englishman can have but little sympathy with that sentimental justice that yields to the exposure of a beautiful bosom, and melts into tears at the sight of a bloody cloak or a gaping wound. A Roman or a Grecian, on the other hand, would have regarded with supreme disgust the impartial majesty of that stern judicature which saw unpitied the weeping children of Strafford, looked unmoved at the bleeding loins of Lilburne, and laughed aloud at the impassioned dagger of Burke.”

Again, not only was the stormy atmosphere of ancient states favorable to the development of eloquence, but the system of national education was adapted to the same

end. The only object to which it was apparently directed, was to create a breed of national orators. In the ages when the codes of law were comparatively simple, when every civil and political result depended on the art with which the public speaker mastered and impelled the minds of the audience or the judges, when in fact the orator was the most important political power in the state, the study and practice of oratory were more necessary than in epochs of more complex civilization; and hence ancient eloquence was more artistic, and demanded far more study than modern. It was, in fact, a fine art, —an art regarded by its cultivators and the public as analogous to sculpture, to poetry, to painting, to music, and to acting. The greatest care, therefore, was taken that children should, first of all, acquire the language in the utmost purity, and that an inclination to the forum should be among their earliest and strongest preferences. It was not by bending painfully over dog's-eared volumes that the Athenian boy gained most of his knowledge. It was by listening to oral discussion, by hearing the great orators speak from the bema, by hearkening to the sages and philosophers in the groves of the Academy, by following the rhapsodists in the streets, or seeing the plays of Æschylus and Sophocles in the theatre, that the Athenian citizen was intellectually trained and instructed. It was from all these sources, but especially from the early habit of engaging in public discussion, that he derived that fertility of resource, that copiousness of language, and that knowledge of the temper and understanding of an audience, which, as Macaulay has remarked, are far more valuable to an orator than the greatest logical powers.

Again, modern oratory has been powerfully influenced by the printing-press, and by the great extension of knowledge which it has caused. When the only way of addressing the public was by orations, and all public measures were debated in popular assemblies, the characters of Orator, Author, Politician, and Editor, almost entirely coincided. Among the ancients, it must be remembered, there was no Press and no representative system of government. Owing to the small territorial area of each state, and the limited numbers of the free population, each citizen was expected to attend in person at the great popular assemblies, where state matters were debated; and so great was the importance which was attached to these debates, that, among the Greeks, the word *ισηγορία*, which etymologically means "equality of rights in debate," was employed as synonymous with *ισονομία*, which was used to express "equality in the eye of the law." Indeed, Demosthenes himself, when, in one of his orations, he would vividly contrast democratic states like Athens with oligarchies and tyrannies, represents his countrymen as "those whose government is based on speaking." In times of public excitement, a great speech was a great dramatic politico-national event, and multitudes in Athens and Rome were drawn to the bema and the rostrum by the same instincts that now lead them to crowd to the news-room, and devour the leading articles and the latest news by electric telegraph. ~~Demosthenes and Pericles were the people's daily newspaper, and their speeches the leading articles.~~ The orator was at once the "Times," the "Saturday Review," the "Edinburgh Review," and a great deal more; he combined in himself the journalist, the debater, the critic, and the preacher, all in one.

In the assembly, the forum, the portico, and the garden, the ancients stood face to face with their great men, and drank in their living thoughts as they fell warm from their lips. "Look," says Tacitus, in the Dialogue already quoted, "look through the circle of the fine arts, survey the whole compass of the sciences, and tell me in what branch can the professors acquire a name to vie with the celebrity of a great and powerful orator. His fame does not depend on the opinion of thinking men, who attend business and watch the administration of affairs; he is applauded by the youth of Rome,—by all who hope to rise by honorable means. The eminent orator is the model which every parent recommends to his children. Even the common people stand and gaze as he passes by; they pronounce his name with pleasure, and point to him as the object of their admiration. The provinces resound with his praise. The strangers who arrive from all parts have heard of his genius; they wish to behold the man; and their curiosity is never at rest till they have seen his person and perused his countenance. Foreign nations court his friendship. The magistrates setting out for their provinces make it their business to ingratiate themselves with the popular speaker, and at their return take care to renew their homage. The powerful orator has no occasion to solicit preferment,—the offices of prætor and consul stand open to him,—to those exalted stations he is invited. Even in the rank of private citizen his share of power is considerable, since his authority sways at once the senate and the people."

Such were the power and influence of the orator in Greece and Rome till the one was conquered and the other imperialized, when the art declined in both. All this has

been changed in modern times, and the effect has been to destroy, to a considerable extent, the distinction between oratory and other productions, and in some degree to diminish the demand for oratory proper. The political orator now speaks less to those who are assembled within the walls of Parliament or Congress than to the public outside. His aim, oftentimes, is not so much to convince and move those into whose faces he looks, as those who will peruse his words on the printed page. He knows that if a thousand persons hear him, ten thousand will read him. Not only the legislator, but the stump orator, and even the advocate on great occasions, address themselves to the reporters. That the new audience is of a different complexion and temper from the old,—that it weighs the speaker's words more carefully and dispassionately, and is influenced more by his facts and logic, and less by his appeals to the passions,—is obvious. The *pugnæ quam pompæ aptius* is the order of the day; and men fight now with the clenched fist, rather than with the open hand,—with logic more than with rhetoric. The magnetism of personal appearance, the charm of manner, the music of the modulated tone, have lost their old supremacy; while the command of facts, the capacity for "cubic thought," the ability to reason, the power of condensed and vivid expression, have acquired a new value. It is not he who can rouse, thrill, or melt his hearers by his electric appeals, that now exercises the greatest and most lasting influence, but he who can make the most forcible and unanswerable statement,—who can furnish the logic of facts, the watchwords of party, the shibboleths of debate,—who can crush an adversary in a sentence, or condense a policy into a thundering epigram. A thousand

presses reproduce his words, and they ring in the brain when the fiery declamation of the merely impassioned orator is forgotten.

The practice of addressing the reporter, a practice unknown in the days of Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, and Chatham, has, in another way, still farther revolutionized the style of public speech-making. As the best reporters fall short of perfect accuracy, many speakers prefer to be their own reporters, in other words, prepare their speeches in manuscript; and now the custom of writing out speeches and committing them to memory, is leading to that of reading them. A large proportion of the so-called "speeches" that are franked by Congressmen to their constituents, are "delivered" in this way. Anything more fatal to a speaker's influence,—better fitted to stifle every germ of eloquence,—cannot be imagined. As Sydney Smith asks: "What can be more ludicrous than an orator delivering stale indignation and fervor of a week old; turning over whole pages of violent passions, written out in German text; reading the tropes and apostrophes into which he is hurried by the ardor of his mind; and so affected at a preconcerted line and page, that he is unable to proceed any further?" Of course there is a gain, in such cases, of precision and accuracy; but the form of the effort has changed. It is not a speech or oration, but a dissertation or essay. The reception given by the House to such performances is just that which might be expected. As they are not designed for the ear of that body, but for the speaker's constituency, the House abandons to the constituency the exclusive enjoyment of them. Indeed, some "speeches" are not so much as read in Congress, but printed "by



permission"; and during the Impeachment of President Johnson, and the discussion of the Silver Bill, a new precedent was established in the United States Senate,—that of "filing" arguments,—a "labor *limæ*" of which Aristarchus and Horace never dreamed. So strong are the tendencies in this direction, that a writer has gone so far as to predict that the day is not far distant when even lawyers will submit printed arguments to judges and juries, to be read and weighed in the chamber and jury-room, and that the practice of making long harangues will be abandoned as tedious and wasteful of time, and tending to mystify and confuse rather than to enlighten and convince.

There is still another way in which oratory, especially legislative oratory, has been influenced by the press. A century ago, when the newspaper was in its infancy, and had not yet aspired to be an organ of public opinion, the great leaders in debate had access to sources of intelligence which were out of the reach of the public, and even to most members of the legislature. To illumine a subject by novel and original arguments, to startle his hearers by new and unexpected information, was then easy for a speaker; and if there was a political crisis, or the question was a vital one, he was listened to with breathless interest. It is said that not a little of the younger Pitt's success was due to his power of weighting his speeches with facts known only to himself, and letting out secrets, where needful, which told like shells as they drop into an advancing column. It was to the facts brought to light, and the considerations urged in debate, that many representatives looked for the materials by which to form their judgments and to guide

their votes. All this the press, with its unrivalled means of collecting and conveying information, has changed. The Gladstone or Disraeli, the Clay or Calhoun of the day, has no facts or statistics concerning the question of the hour, which are not open to the humblest citizen. Weeks before the final struggle comes, the daily journals have sucked up, from all the sources of information, all the facts, arguments, and illustrations pertinent to the subject, like so many electrical machines gathering electricity from the atmosphere into themselves. All the precedents and parallel cases which have the remotest bearing upon the issue, have been preëmpted by the editors and their contributors; and when the unfortunate senator gets on his legs, he finds his arguments anticipated, his metaphors stale, his "thunder" stolen, and his subject in the condition of a squeezed orange.

There is yet another circumstance which has lessened the influence of the orator, at least of the political orator, in modern times, especially within the last century. It is the spirit of party, which steels men's minds against conviction, and renders his impassioned appeals unavailing. In the days when there were no newspapers and no reporters, the representative in a political assembly was comparatively independent of his constituents. His vote upon a measure was determined more or less by the arguments which were marshalled for or against it by the leaders in debate. The orator might then hope to produce that effect which Cicero considered so honorable,—"mentes impellere quò velit, unde autem velit deducere." Now, the chains of party are so strong, he is so cowed by fear of his political chiefs, so hampered by his fear of the electors, that he has almost ceased to be a

free agent. In vain does the orator bring forward the weightiest, the most unanswerable reasons for a bill; in vain does he urge its adoption by the most passionate appeals; the Opposition laughs, weeps, applauds, but does not change its votes. The men whom he addresses, at least many of them, have held their political sentiments till they have become rooted in the very fibres of their being. From their very childhood, they have been fed with the milk of radicalism, or nourished on the strong meat of conservatism, till a change of opinion would involve a change in their mental constitution. If, instead of being thus steeled against conviction, they could be persuaded in a single instance by a hostile orator, they would sacrifice that single instance to the general principles on which their preference is founded. Ferguson of Pitfour, a Scotch member of Parliament, and a supporter of the younger Pitt, was a type of too many representatives. He used to say: "I have heard many arguments which convinced my judgment, but never one that influenced my vote." The party speaker is robbed of half of his eloquence, because he speaks under an evident restraint. His tone is not that of a bold, independent thinker, without which there can be no eloquence of the highest order, but that of an agent. He is shackled by a consciousness of his responsibility; he is thinking of the pledges of the last election, and of the prospects of the next.

That there has been a great change, within a hundred years, in the oratory of the British Parliament, is known to all. In the days of Chatham, and of Fox, Pitt, and Burke, the mere gift of eloquence alone was a passport,—as it was almost the only passport,—to the highest

offices in the state. A man could not then so readily ride into office on the shoulders of a mob. But if he could sway the House of Commons, the lack of other abilities was excused. George the Third used to say that Pitt knew nothing of Vattel, and we have the minister's own statement that the only history of England he had read was Shakspeare. Fox led the Opposition in utter ignorance of political economy, and Sheridan failed of the Chancelorship of the Exchequer only because he could not master the mystery of fractions. The speeches made in Parliament were then the topics of common conversation; they influenced the votes of the House; they startled their hearers into admiration; they calmed or roused the passions of the country. No parallel can be cited in later times to the effect produced in the House of Commons by Sheridan's famous harangue upon the "Fourth Charge" against Warren Hastings, or to the spell in which the House was bound by the elder Pitt.

Sir James Mackintosh once observed that the true light in which to consider speaking in the House of Commons was as an animated conversation on public business, and that it was rare for any speech to succeed which was raised on any other basis. Canning held a similar opinion. He said that the House was a business assembly, and that the debates must conform to its predominant character; that it was particularly jealous of ornament and declamation, and that, if they were employed at all, they must seem to spring naturally out of the subject. There must be method also, but this should be felt in the effect rather than seen in the manner,—no formal divisions, set exordiums, or perorations, as the old rhetoricians taught, would do. First and last and everywhere you must aim

at reasoning, and, if you would be eloquent, you might at any time, but not at an appointed time. Macaulay, in a letter to Prof. Whewell, calls the House "the most peculiar audience in the world. A place where Walpole succeeded, and Addison failed; where Dundas succeeded, and Burke failed; where Peel now succeeds, and where Mackintosh fails; where Erskine and Scarlett were dinner-bells; where Lawrence and Jekyll, the two wittiest men, or nearly so, of their time, were thought bores,—is surely a very strange place."

If in the days of Mackintosh and Canning the House hated rhetoric, and was bent on transacting business, rather than on listening to grand exordiums and studied perorations, to-day it is even more practical, and more fiercely intolerant of fine speeches and abstractions. Government now takes its rank among the sciences, and mere intellectual cleverness, unallied with experience, information, and character, has little weight or influence. The leaders of Conservatism and Liberalism are no longer men who have the art of manufacturing polished and epigrammatic phrases, but those who are skilled in the arts of Parliamentary fence and management, and who have made state-craft the study of their lives. These men, though they hem, and haw and stammer, and can hardly put their sentences together in logical order, take their seats on the Treasury bench as Secretaries of State, while the mere orators, who have no special experience or information, sit on the back benches or below the gangway. Indeed, according to the testimony of an able British reviewer, it has even been the custom of late to decry oratorical powers, as tending to dazzle and mislead, rather than to instruct and to edify; and to praise the dull, dry harangue of the plod-

ding man of business, who crams down the throat of his audience a heap of statistical facts, and then wonders to find his hearers yawning or asleep, rather than the brilliant speech of the trained orator, who enlivens his theme with the sallies of wit, and adorns it with the graces of imagery. So great a change has taken place, even within the last half century, that the House is now little more than a place where five or six hundred gentlemen meet to do business, very much after the fashion of a board of bank directors. Disraeli, Bright, and Palmer, indulge in no such bursts of oratory as shook the senate in the latter half of the eighteenth century. They state their views plainly, tersely, with little preambling and little embellishment; and having delivered themselves of what they had to say, they conclude as abruptly as they began. Occasionally speeches of a more ambitious kind are heard in the House; but they are so few that their contrast to the ordinary tone of the debates is only the more glaring.

From all these considerations it is evident that oratory no longer occupies the place which it once did, before the discovery of "the art preservative of arts," and the general diffusion of knowledge. It is no longer the only effective weapon of the statesman and the reformer. There are no potentates now that, like Philip of Macedon, would offer a town of ten thousand inhabitants for an orator. But shall we therefore hastily conclude that eloquence is a useless art,—that time and labor spent in its study is wasted? Is it, indeed, true that the orator's occupation has gone,—that the newspaper has killed him,—that his speech is forestalled by the daily editorial, which, flying on the wings of steam, addresses fifty thousand men, while he speaks to five hundred? By no means. Eloquence is not,

and never will be, a useless art. In one form or another, it is immortal, and, so long as there are human hearts beating with hope and fear, love and passionate hatred, can never perish. It may no longer enjoy a monopoly of influence, as before the days of Gutenberg and Fust; the form and tone of society may change, demanding different styles of oratory in different ages; but wherever human beings exist who have souls to be thrilled, the public speaker will find scope for the exertion of his powers. "Wherever," as Emerson says, "the polarities meet, wherever the fresh moral sentiment, the instinct of freedom and duty, comes in direct opposition to fossil conservatism and the thirst of gain, the spark will pass."

Man, in short, so long as he is a social being, will never cease, in public as well as in private, to talk. Extend the empire of the press to whatever point you will,—double, treble, and quadruple its power,—and yet the day will never come when this "fourth estate of the nation" can do the entire work of the orator. In every civilized community,—at least, in every free country,—it will still be necessary to cite precedents and analyze testimony and enforce great principles in the courts, to explain measures in the halls of legislation, to rouse and move men from the platform and the hustings, and, above all, to plead with men in the house of God. Not a day passes in which it is not in the power of a persuasive tongue to exert some influence, for good or evil, over the will, judgments, and actions of men; and so far is it from being true that oratorical gifts in this age are comparatively useless, that there is probably no other accomplishment which, when possessed even in a moderate degree, raises its possessor to consideration with equal rapidity, none for which there is

a more constant demand in the senate, at the bar, on the hustings, and in almost every sphere of professional labor. Even should we admit all that has been claimed regarding the impoverished condition to which civil eloquence has been reduced in modern times by the complexity of business, it must still be remembered that, as De Quincey has observed, oratory has received a new dowry of power, and that of the highest order, in the sanctities of our religion, a field unknown to antiquity, since the Pagan religions produced no oratory whatever.

Again, it should be remembered that the political platform offers a field of oratory not inferior to any it has enjoyed during the world's history. Chained or muzzled in the courts, and scorned in the legislature, it may here spurn the earth with its broadest pinions, and wing its flight, without let or hindrance, to the "highest heaven of invention." The Platform, the occasional stage of the Fourth-of-July panegyrist and the Commencement orator, is the great theatre of the agitator,—the stage on which reformers and enthusiasts of every kind, civil, political, moral, and financial, come to present their respective theories to the people, and to organize those movements, that "pressure from without," those manufactures of public opinion, which are now relied upon as the great means of revolutionizing legislatures and changing the laws. At the "monster meetings" which are there addressed, the orator is restricted by no "Robert's Manual" or five-minute rule, but can expatiate at will, convincing his hearers by facts and logic, convulsing them with wit and humor, or rousing them by his fiery appeals, like another Antony "moving the very stones of Rome to rise and mutiny." Besides this, the lecture-room affords still



another field for almost every species of eloquence,—a field which is more and more occupied at each succeeding year, and which was altogether unknown to the orators of antiquity.

It is true there are no schools of rhetoric now, in which the entire education of a young man is directed to make him an orator. It is true, also, that the style of speaking which was irresistible in an ancient assembly,—an assembly made up of men “educated exactly to that point at which men are most susceptible of strong and sudden impressions, acute, but not sound reasoners, warm in their feelings, unfixed in their principles, and passionate admirers of fine composition,”—is not the most influential now. The exclamations and tropes which produced the mightiest effects upon the sensitive populace of Athens or Rome, would now, with whatever modulation or gesture they might be declaimed, make but little impression upon a legislative assembly. The oratorical device by which Scipio Africanus shook off a charge of peculation, would hardly avail a modern Chancellor of the Exchequer or Secretary of the Treasury. If President Grant had been impeached before the United States Senate, it would hardly have helped his case to say, “This day last year I won the battle of Chattanooga; therefore why debate?” The day has gone by, too, when the mere objective features of oratory, the statuary and the millinery, were as potent almost as the sentiments uttered; and why? Nobody can doubt that, as another has said, if the ancient oratory were in demand now, it would wake from the sleep of two thousand years without the aid of the rhetorician. But the truth is, it is to the very superiority of our civilization to that of the ancients, that the revolution in oratory, and the apparent

diminution of its influence, are owing. Instead of lamenting, we should rejoice that we no longer live on that volcanic soil which in former ages produced fiery orators in such abundance. It is because society is no longer under the sway of a few leading men,—because revolutions, tumults, and popular commotions, have ceased to be the chief business of life,—because knowledge has been generally diffused, men have learned to think for themselves, and the free nations of the earth are disposed to rest the security of the state and of individuals on the broad foundations of laws and institutions, and not on popular caprice or the power of any one man, however wise or able,—that modern eloquence has assumed a character so different from the ancient, and is regarded by many as comparatively cold and tame.

It is one of the proudest distinctions of modern society that the ancient power of individuals is lessened; that it is no longer possible for a great man, by violence or artful contrivance, to overthrow a state; that he is continually taught that the world can do without him, and that, if he would do the greatest good, he must combine with other men, rather than be their master or dictator. It is not by absorbing all power into himself, and becoming at once the brain, the tongue, and the hand of a whole people, that the man of genius to-day is to promote the happiness or the glory of the state to which he belongs, but by an open influence on public opinion and a wise coöperation with others, who are jealous of their rights, and will not place them at the mercy of one man, however wise or great. The orator, therefore, however rare or dazzling his gifts, can no longer be the despot that he once was, either for good or for evil. It is no longer by his agency chiefly that

public opinion is formed or expressed, but by private discussion, by the interchange of sentiments at the fireside, on the street, at the exchange, and, above all, by the agency of the press and the telegraph. Even the character of public discussions has changed. A modern debate, it has been truly said, is not a struggle between a few leading men for triumph over each other and an ignorant multitude; the orator himself is but one of the multitude, deliberating with them upon the common interests; and, instead of coming to a raw, unenlightened audience, who have never weighed the subjects upon which he is to address them, and who are ready to be the victims of any cunning and plausible speaker who can blind them by his sophistry, dazzle them by his rhetoric, or captivate them by his honeyed accents, he finds that he is speaking to men who have read, thought, and pondered upon his theme, who have already decided opinions, and care less to hear his eloquence than to know what his eloquence can do for the question.

From all this it is evident that the demand for oratory is not less than in former ages, but that a different style of oratory is demanded. Because imagination and passion do not predominate in modern eloquence, but hold a subordinate place; because the orator speaks to the head as well as to the heart of his hearers, and employs facts and logic more than the flowers of fancy; because his most fiery and burning appeals are pervaded with reason and argument as well as with passion, it by no means follows that his power is curtailed. As well might we conclude that the earthquake and the tempest are the mightiest agencies in nature because their results are instantaneous and visible, and that the gentle rain, the dew, and the sunshine are

feeble in comparison, because they work slowly, quietly, and unseen. Is it a task less noble to convince than to inflame mankind? Does a sudden burst of feeling require a greater power or intensity of mind than a long chain of reasoning? Has not argument as well as explosion its eloquence, and may it not be adorned with as splendid illustrations?

The truth is, the modern orator has no less, perhaps even more influence, than the ancient, but he acts more slowly and by degrees. He wins his triumphs of conviction, not in the very hour he speaks, but in the course of weeks, and months, and years. It is not by isolated successes, but in the aggregate, by reiteration, by accumulation, that he prevails. As an English writer has beautifully said, the enchanted spear is not without its place among the weapons of our oratorical armory; but, like that of Ariosto, it only fells the enemy to the ground, and leaves him to start up again unwounded. Fine sentiments, well turned and polished periods, have still more or less of their old charm with our deliberative assemblies; their effects may be seen in the pleased looks, the profound silence, or the applause of the listeners; but they are not seen in the final enumeration of the ayes and noes. The great majority of the members contrive to break the enchanter's spell before they vote. But though the influence of individual speeches may be comparatively slight, the influence of the entire eloquence of a leading speaker may be very great. The effects of his oratory may be none the less real, because they are gradual and hardly perceived; none the less powerful, because it is a slow fire, and not a thunderbolt. It has been justly said that there is for every man a statement possible of that truth which he is most unwilling to

receive,—a statement possible, so broad and so pungent that he cannot get away from it, but must either bend to it or die of it. By dint of perseverance and reiteration the orator may produce an impression which no single blow, however vigorously struck, would make. Every impression, however faint, leaves the hearer more apt for impression in future by the same hand. A lodgment is made in his heart, and if it be steadily followed up, though he cannot be stormed, he may be sapped, and at last find it convenient to capitulate.

Again, in spite of the party whip, in spite of the utmost perfection of party drill, there are occasional great crises in public affairs,—extraordinary periods,—when men will burst away from the ranks, and vote according to their convictions. As well might the sands of the desert expect to be unstirred by the winds, and to remain in a solid mass, as parties expect that they will remain unchanged by the tornado of eloquence,—the whirlwind and storm of oratory,—that at such times sweeps over them.

More than all, *character* is an important factor in modern eloquence. It is his virtues, his stability, his known zeal for the right and the true, that quite as much as the magnetism of his looks, his siren voice, his graces of address, and electric periods, must win for the orator attention and confidence now. It is the man behind the words that must give them momentum and projectile force. The impression which every speaker makes on his fellows, is the moral resultant, not only of what he *says*, but of all that he has grown up *to be*; of his manhood, weak or strong, sterling or counterfeit; of a funded but unreckoned influence, accumulating unconsciously, and spending itself, as the man is deep or shal-

low, like a reservoir, or like a spout or an April shower. Especially in times of civil commotion, in great crises, when public interests are imperilled, when war or anarchy threatens the land, is this element of oratory most potent. It is no festival eloquence, no vain mockery of art, that will then meet the exigency, but the sincere, heart-felt appeals of a speaker whose whole life has exemplified the sentiments he enforces, and who is known to be willing to give his life, if need be, in defense of his principles. Thus supported, the faculty of speech is power,—power such as no other faculty can give, and we may say of it in the words of an eloquent writer: “It is political power; it is statesmanship. No recommendation can supply the absence of its prestige. Splendid abilities, the utmost literary renown, are without it insufficient testimonies. Dissociated from it, the historian of the Roman Empire lingers below the gangway. Assisted by it, a cornet of horse becomes the arbiter of Europe.”

Finally, it should not be forgotten that while the ancient orator enjoyed certain advantages which are denied to his successor at the present day, these are compensated in a great measure by the prodigious extension of knowledge, and the consequently greatly increased number and variety of ideas and illustrations which are at the command of the modern orator. As far as the world,—we had almost said, the universe,—made known by science to the moderns exceeds that known to the ancients, so far do the facts and ideas which the speaker of the nineteenth century may employ, surpass in multitude, variety, and grandeur, those which were at the disposal of the most brilliant or potent genius of antiquity. Not only have the vast additions made to human knowledge

by the discoveries of the physical geographer, the geologist, the chemist, the botanist, the natural philosopher, and the astronomer, furnished a store of new ideas, allusions, and images, with which to captivate, startle, or enlighten an assembly, but history has replenished her storehouses with myriads of new political precedents and examples of heroism and virtue; modern poetry has added its gems of thought and expression,—its charmed words,—to those which antiquity has bequeathed to us; and, more than all, the christian religion has opened a new fountain of inspiration, and furnished the orator with a store of thoughts, images, and associations, which, whether fitted to please and inspire, or to awe and appal, are more powerful than any others in moving the human heart.

To conclude,—in comparing the influence of ancient and modern oratory, we have spoken of some of the changes which have taken place within two centuries in modern British eloquence. There is still another change which it may not be improper to consider for a few moments in this place. Why is it that parliamentary speeches, both in this country and England, are now adorned, (or disfigured, as the reader pleases,) with so few quotations from the classics? Is it because the age is less pedantic than formerly? or because the legislators of this century have less knowledge of the Greek and Roman authors, and less taste for them, than the legislators of the eighteenth century? Certain it is that the apt and telling quotations for which Horace and Virgil used to be racked, are heard no more in our political assemblies. A great speech unadorned by a few Latin verses was a rarity in the days of Pitt; and the English poets,

too, of which Mr. Bright has now a monopoly, were never long neglected. Burke quoted Horace, Lucan, and Juvenal; gems from Virgil sparkle in almost all of his speeches; and to brilliants borrowed from Milton some of his finest passages owe half of their effect. Fox, though a fine classic, quoted rarely, and then from Virgil;\* but some of Pitt's most happy effects were produced by apt quotation. His mind was so thoroughly steeped in classical literature, that it colors his speeches "like the shifting, varying, yet constantly prevalent hue in shot silk." His allusion to the departure of fortune, *Laudo manentem*, etc.; his reply to Conway on the East India bill, in which he appropriated Scipio's answer, "*Si nullâ aliâ re, modestia certè et temperando linguam adolescens senem vicero*"; his application of the beams of the rising sun that shot through the windows of the House, while he was prophesying a better day for Africa,—

"Nos ubi primus equis Oriens afflavit anhelis  
Illic sera rubens accendit lumina vesper";—

his application to Fox of the lines,

"Stetimus tela aspera contra  
Contulimusque manus: experto crede quantus  
In clipeum assurgat, quo turbine torqueat hastam"

were some of the things that made his fame. In later times Canning, who was a fine classical scholar, sprinkled

\* Lord Lytton, in his admirable essays on "Life, Literature, and Manners," observes that "in the Fox of St. Stephen's, the nervous reasoner from premises the broadest and most popular, there is no trace of the Fox of St. Anne's, the refining verbal critic, with an almost feminine delight in the filigree and trinkets of literature. At rural leisure, under his apple-blossoms, his predilection in scholarship is for its daintiest subtleties; his happiest remarks are on writers very little read. But place the great critic on the floor of the House of Commons, and not a vestige of the fine verbal critic is visible. His classical allusions are then taken from passages the most popularly known. And, indeed, it was a saying of Fox's, that 'no young member should hazard in Parliament a Latin quotation not found in the Eton Grammar.'"—*Caxtoniana*, Vol. I, p. 353.



his speeches with felicitous quotations from the Latin poets. In one of his most luminous and eloquent speeches, delivered in 1826 in defense of his Portuguese policy, he likens England to the ruler of the winds, as described by Virgil:

"Celsa sedet Æolus arce  
Sceptra tenens; mollitque animos; temperat iras;  
Ni faciat, maria ac terras caelumque profundum  
Quippe ferant rapidi secum, verrantque per auras."

In the courts of justice also, both of England and our own country, striking effects used to be produced by well-chosen bits from Virgil, Martial, and Horace. What could be happier than the reply of Law (afterward Lord Ellenborough), to an angry explosion of Erskine, to whom Chief Justice Kenyon, before whom they were pleading, was unduly partial? Fixing his eye first on Erskine, and then on Kenyon, Law replied in the words of the prostrate Turnus to Æneas:

"Non me tua fervida terrent  
Dicta, ferox! Dii me terrent, et Jupiter hostis."

Not less felicitous was the skill with which William Wirt, in the celebrated "steamboat case" which came before the Supreme Court of the United States in 1824, retorted on his eminent antagonist, Mr. Emmet, a quotation of the latter from Virgil. The cause was one of deep interest and importance, not only on account of the individual rights involved, but on account of the collisions of those of the State of New York with those of Connecticut and New Jersey, which gave rise to it. The chief question was whether the laws of the first-named State, which conferred upon Messrs. Fulton and Livingston the exclusive right to navigate its waters with steamboats, were or were not in violation of the Constitution of the United

States. Mr. Emmet, who was counsel for New York, had eloquently personified her as casting her eyes over the ocean, witnessing everywhere the triumphs of her genius, and exclaiming, in the language of Æneas:

'Quae regio in terris, nostri non plenae laboris?'

Mr. Wirt saw at once the error his opponent had committed, and giving the true sense of the word "laboris," turned the tables upon him as follows:

"Sir, it was not in the moment of triumph, nor with the feelings of triumph, that Æneas uttered that exclamation. It was when, with his faithful Achates by his side, he was surveying the works of art with which the palace of Carthage was adorned, and his attention had been caught by a representation of the battles of Troy. There he saw the sons of Atreus and Priam, and the fierce Achilles. The whole extent of his fortunes; the loss and desolation of his friends; the fall of his beloved country; rushed upon his recollection:

'Constitit et lachrymans, quis jam locus, inquit, Achate,  
Quae regio in terris, nostri non plenae laboris?'

"Sir, the passage may hereafter have a closer application to the cause than my eloquent and classical friend intended. For if the state of things which has already commenced, is to go on; if the spirit of hostility which already exists in three of our states, is to catch by contagion, and spread among the rest, as, from the progress of the human passions, and the unavoidable conflict of interests, it will too surely do; what are we to expect? Civil wars, arising from far inferior causes, have desolated some of the fairest provinces of the earth. . . . It is the high province of this court to interpose its benign and mediatorial influence. . . . If, sir, you do not interpose your friendly hand, and extirpate the seeds of anarchy which New York has sown, you *will* have civil war. The war of legislation, which has already commenced, will, according to its usual course, become a war of blows. Your country will be shaken with civil strife. Your republican institutions will perish in the conflict. Your constitution will fall. The last hope of nations will be gone. And what will be the effect upon the rest of the world? Look abroad at the scenes now passing upon our globe, and judge of that effect. The friends of free government throughout the earth, who have been heretofore animated by our example, and have cheerfully cast their glance to it, as to their polar star, to guide them through the stormy seas of revolution, will witness our fall *with dismay and despair*. The arm that is every where lifted in the cause of liberty, will drop unnerved by the warrior's side. Despotism will have its day of triumph, and will accomplish the purpose at which it too certainly aims. It will cover the earth with the mantle of mourning. *Then*, sir, when New York shall look upon this scene of ruin, if she have the generous feelings which I believe her to have, it will not be with her head aloft, in the pride of conscious triumph, her 'rapt soul sitting in her eyes.' No, sir, no! Dejected with shame and confusion, drooping

under the weight of her sorrow, with a voice suffocated with despair, *well* may she *then* exclaim,

' Quis jam locus, —————  
Quae regio in terris, nostri non plenae laboris?' \* \*

At the present day, with the exception of Gladstone, who introduces a new bit of Virgil into every fresh speech, no English or American orator adorns his speeches with jewels from the ancient classics. The late Lord Palmerston startled the public a few years ago with a *morceau* from Seneca; but the practice has nearly passed away. The explanation of the change is, that the age is intensely practical. In the early stages of civilization oratory and literature are apt to be confounded; but, as society advances, the distinction between them becomes more and more broadly marked. Oratory ceases to talk; writing ceases to be speech-like. The world, in these prosaic, utilitarian times, is becoming every day more impatient of pedantry, of rhetorical display, of everything that favors or savors of long-windedness; and parliamentary and forensic orators, knowing this fact, try to speak tersely and to the point, avoiding everything that is merely ornamental. It is said by a traveler that the wild Indian hunter will sometimes address a bear in a strain of eloquence, and make a visible impression on him; but whatever may be the taste of Indians and bears, it is certain that civilized men, in proportion as they increase in culture, will avoid whatever is high-flown in oratory, study brevity and plainness, and keep to the subject before them.

\* Mr. Wirt was a constant student of the Latin classics, and often quoted them, with great felicity, in the court-room. "In the company of men of letters," he used to say, "there is no higher accomplishment than that of readily making an apt quotation from the classics; and before such a body as the Supreme Court these quotations are not only appropriate, but constitute a beautiful aid to argument. They mark the scholar,—which is always agreeable to a bench that is composed of scholars."

## CHAPTER III.

### QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ORATOR.

OF all the efforts of the human mind, there is no one which demands for its success so rare a union of mental gifts as eloquence. For its ordinary displays the prerequisites are clear perception, memory, power of statement, logic, imagination, force of will, and passion; but, for its loftiest flights, it demands a combination of the most exalted powers,—a union of the rarest faculties. Unite in one man the most varied and dissimilar gifts,—a strong and masculine understanding with a brilliant imagination; a nimble wit with a solid judgment; a prompt and tenacious memory with a lively and fertile fancy; an eye for the beauties of nature with a knowledge of the realities of life; a brain stored with the hived wisdom of the ages, and a heart swelling with emotion,—and you have the *moral* elements of a great orator. But even these qualifications, so seldom harmonized in one man, are not all. Eloquence is a physical as well as an intellectual product; it has to do with the body as well as with the mind. It is not a cold and voiceless enunciation of abstract truth; it is truth warm and palpitating,—reason “permeated and made red-hot with passion.” It demands, therefore, a trained, penetrating, and sympathetic voice, ranging through all the keys in the scale, by which all the motions and agitations, all the shuddering and throbbings of the heart, no less than the subtlest acts, the nimblest operations of the

mind,—in fine, all the modifications of the moral life,—may find a tone, an accent. The eye as well as the lips, the heaving chest and the swaying arm, the whole frame quivering with emotion, have a part; and the speech that thrills, melts, or persuades, is the result of them all combined. The orator needs, therefore, a stout bodily frame, especially as his calling is one that rapidly wears the nerves, and exhausts the vital energy.

A man may have the bow of Ulysses, but of what use is it, if he has not strength to bend it to his will? His arrows may be of silver, and gold-tipped; they may be winged with the feathers of the very bird of Paradise; but if he cannot draw them to the head, and send them home to the mark, of what value are they to him? The most potent speakers, in all ages, have been distinguished for bodily stamina. They have been, with a few remarkable exceptions, men of brawny frame, with powerful digestive organs, and lungs of great aerating capacity. They have been men “who, while they had a sufficient thought-power to create all the material needed, had pre-eminently the explosive power by which they could thrust their materials out at men. They were catapults, and men went down before them.” Burke and Fox were men of stalwart frame. Mirabeau had the neck of a bull, and a prodigious chest out of which issued that voice of thunder before which the French chamber quailed in awe. Brougham had a constitution of *lignum-vitæ*, which stood the wear and tear of ceaseless activity for more than eighty years. Daniel Webster's *physique* was so extraordinary that it drew all eyes upon him; and Sydney Smith could describe him only as “a steam-engine in breeches.” Chalmers had a large frame,

with a ponderous brain, and a general massiveness of countenance which suggested great reserved strength, and reminded those who watched it in repose of one of Landseer's or Thorwaldsen's lions. Even those orators who have not had giant frames, have had, at least, closely-knit ones,—the bodily activity and quickness of the athlete. It was said of Lord Erskine that his action sometimes reminded one of a blood-horse. When urging a plea with passionate fervor, his eye flashed, the nostril distended, he threw back his head, "his neck was clothed with thunder." There was in him the magnificent animal, as well as the proud and fiery intellect, and the whole frame quivered with pent-up excitement. Curran could rise before a jury, after a session of sixteen hours, with a brief intermission, and make one of the most memorable arguments of his life. The massive frames of O'Connell and John Bright, England's greatest living orator, are familiar to all.

Besides all these qualifications, there are others hardly less essential to the ideal orator. He must have the continuity of thought which is requisite for a prolonged argument, and the ready wit which can seize and turn to use any incident which may occur in the course of its delivery. Last, but not least, is demanded that commanding *will*, which, as it is one of the most valuable mental gifts, is also one of the rarest, and is still more rarely found in union with the brilliant and dazzling qualities that are the soul of every art which is to subdue or captivate mankind.

In view of the extraordinary qualifications required for the highest eloquence, it is not strange that it is so uncommon. A great orator,—one who has perfectly

grasped the art of bodying forth to eye and ear all there is in him, and who utters accordingly great thoughts and great feelings, is a most rare and magnificent creation of the Almighty. There is a well-known saw which declares that "the poet is born, the orator is made"; but nothing can be more absurd than this distinction. Both are *born*, and both are *made*. As the poet, however gifted, requires much and careful self-culture to produce the finest verse, so the orator, however Herculean his industry, needs a basis of native genius, as well as incessant study and practice, to reach the loftiest heights of eloquence. Without the native faculty, the inborn genius, he may become a fluent declaimer, but in vain will he covet the grand triumphs of the rostrum. The profoundest reflection and the most exhaustless knowledge are unavailing here. Nature only it is that can inspire that rapturous enthusiasm, that burning passion, that "furious pride and joy of the soul," which calls up the imagination of the orator,—that makes his rhetoric become a whirlwind, and his logic, fire.

The grandest passages, the most thrilling bursts, in the annals of eloquence, have been those which have cost the least trouble; for they came as if by inspiration. Like a chariot-wheel in violent motion, the soul of the orator catches fire in the swiftness of its movement, and throws off those divine flashes which fascinate mankind. Chatham's indignant burst in reply to the Duke of Richmond was of this character, and who does not do homage to its lofty grandeur? Thurlow's scathing reply to the Duke of Grafton, when the latter had taunted him with the meanness of his extraction,—Grattan's overwhelming denuncia-

tion of Flood,—Curran's blasting denunciations of the government and its bribed informers, amid the clanking of arms that were pointed at his heart,—were all such gushes of inspiration. Who that reads Henry's burning speeches can doubt that his most thrilling appeals were prompted by a similar flush of feeling? And if we go back to the great orators of antiquity, how strikingly is this exemplified in their most memorable triumphs? In every case we find that oratory, like the inspiration of the poet, or the brilliant conceptions of the painter, flows from a source which is beyond the reach of human ken. The essential secret is a gift of God, and in vain do we try to grasp it and to describe it by seizing its mere forms. As Webster has said, "labor and learning may toil for it; but they will toil in vain." It was not from rules and precepts only that Demosthenes derived that eloquence which is represented as lightning, bearing down every opposer. No study,—no elaborate preparation,—could have produced those electric appeals,—"that disdain, anger, boldness, freedom, involved in a continual stream of argument, which make his orations the most perfect of oratorical discourses." To all such orators the secret of their grandest successes was doubtless as much a mystery as to their hearers. They had arranged nothing,—prepared nothing. A leading idea,—a central thought,—was present to the mind; but the distribution of the figures, and the harmonious adaptation of the colors, were left to that wonderful influence which directs genius and consecrates it to immortality.

Socrates used to say that "all men are sufficiently eloquent in that which they understand"; but it would have been more correct to say that no man can be eloquent on a



subject which he does not understand; and it is equally certain that no man can be eloquent who has not certain mental and physical gifts as well as knowledge. Dr. Horace Bushnell says, in one of his lectures, that forty hundred pulpits are wondering that there are no more of the eloquent ministers for *them*. As well might he wonder that in every village there is no Phidias or Raphael, and on the wall of every church no Last Supper, in fresco, by Da Vinci. Excellence, by its very definition, is exceptional, and in oratory it is even rarer than in sculpture or painting.

The names of all the men in ancient times, who, by the common consent of their contemporaries, had reached the highest pinnacle of eloquence, may be counted on the fingers of one hand. Greece boasted her three great dramatic poets, besides her epic; but she produced but one Demosthenes. The names of Æschines, Lysias, and Hyperides have, indeed, survived the wrecks of time; but they were rather finished rhetoricians than masters of the oratorical art. The fame of Roman oratory is upheld by Cicero alone. Calvus, Cælius, Curio, Crassus, Hortensius, Cæsar, rose one above another; but the most eloquent of these lags so far behind the master, that he is only *proximus, sed longo intervallo*. Cicero himself had so lofty an ideal of his art, that he was dissatisfied not only with his own performances, but with those of Demosthenes. *Ita sunt avidae et capaces meae aures*, says he, *et semper aliquid immensum infinitumque desiderant*. The number of great orators in modern times is almost equally small. The pulpit and political eloquence of France, whose Celtic genius is peculiarly oratorical, boasts of but two great names, Bossuet and Mirabeau, that are comparable with

those of her great dramatists; and fertile as Great Britain has been in oratorical genius during upward of a century, she has never, amid all her epochs of revolution and senatorial contest, from the days of Bacon to those of Bright, produced a single public speaker worthy to rank with Milton or Shakspeare.

No doubt many persons have enjoyed, for a time, great fame and influence without some of the qualities which we have named as essential to the perfect orator. A brilliant imagination and a sparkling wit may blind us for a while to the lack of a solid judgment; and vehement action or cogent reasoning may make us for the moment forget a squeaking voice, an ugly face, or a diminutive figure. John Randolph had a short, small body, perched upon high crane legs, so that, when he stood up, you did not know when he was to end; yet he commanded the attention of the House of Representatives, in spite of his gaunt figure and his ear-splitting scream; and Wilberforce was a power in Parliament, though he had but a pigmy body and a voice weak and painfully shrill. Boswell, who heard him in 1784 at York, wrote to a friend: "I saw what seemed a mere *shrimp* mount upon the table; but, as I listened, he grew and grew until the shrimp became a whale." Richard Lalor Sheil thrilled the Irish people, notwithstanding his dwarfish frame, his ungraceful action, and a voice so harsh and violent as often to rise to a positive shriek. The most magical of American preachers, Summerfield, the stories of whose oratorical feats read like a page from the "Arabian Nights," was "femininely feeble, an invalid all his days." Biography abounds with these examples of the mind triumphing over matter; and indeed, there is on record hardly any positive proof that

physical defects, whether of voice or person, have ever completely neutralized the effect of eloquent thoughts and sentiments, when the spirit that kindles them was really in the man,—when the elements of oratory were deep-seated in his soul. Nevertheless it is certain that few men even *aspire* to eminence as public speakers to whom Nature has been niggard of the proper physical gifts; and, though one may sway the hearts of his fellow-men without a harmonious or sonorous voice, an expressive countenance, an imposing person, and the other bodily attributes which are essential to the full charm of eloquence, yet there is scarcely an instance of a man's rising to the loftiest heights of oratory without them.

Again, it is evident that, for temporary success, even vulgar qualities may be the most efficient, and the orator may owe his triumphs to the use of arts which he secretly despises. As immediate influence, not lasting fame, is usually the object for which the speaker is striving, he must, of course, conform, in a certain degree, to the tastes of those he addresses and to the ruling passions of the hour, and hence the quality of his appeals must depend, in a great degree, upon the intelligence or ignorance, the nobleness or vulgarity, of his hearers. The exigences of modern society, and especially of modern political warfare, have called into being a class of public speakers whose efforts fall as far below those of the ideal orator in grandeur and beauty as they excel them, occasionally, in immediate utility. It is not merely in the degree, but also in the nature of their excellence, that the speeches of these two classes differ. While with the one class oratory is a severe and exacting art, demanding the closest application, and aiming not merely to excite the passions or sway the judgment for the

time being, but also to produce a deep and permanent impression,—perhaps to produce models for the delight and admiration of mankind,—the aim of the other class is simply a temporary effect, an immediate result, to which all other considerations are sacrificed. While the former speak rarely, and at long intervals, during which they saturate their minds with their themes, casting their thoughts into such moulds as are best fitted to enhance their intrinsic worth or beauty, the latter are always ready with facts, arguments, and real or simulated enthusiasm, to champion any cause or measure that party interests may require. While the speeches of the one class, at once charming by their intrinsic beauty and compelling conviction by their power, are a study for the intellect and a pleasure to the imagination, and are read and studied for ages as models of the oratorical art, as men study the poems of Milton or Tennyson, or the paintings of Raphael or Titian, the effusions of the other, deriving their interest from extraneous causes that cease with the excitement of the hour, produce an immediate effect, which is testified by applause or votes, but, after a few days, or months, or years, are forever forgotten. It is still true, therefore, that while great influence, and even temporary fame, may be acquired without the coöperation of all the qualities we have enumerated, yet eloquence of the highest order,—the divine art which “harmonizes language till it becomes a music, and shapes thought into a talisman,”—demands the rare union of gifts we have named.

It is a noteworthy fact that while every civilized country and every age of civilization has had its eloquent men, the great speakers have generally appeared in clusters, not singly, and at long intervals of time. By some mysterious,

inexplicable law, the divine afflatus of genius comes rushing on a particular generation, and a brilliant galaxy of orators appears in some country, perhaps in several countries at once. As the great painters and sculptors appeared together in the Middle Ages,—as the great musical composers came in one age,—as the great dramatists of English literature belong to one reign,—and as the great poets of this century sang together immediately after the French Revolution,—so the most illustrious orators have blazed out in the intellectual heavens, not at long intervals or as “bright, particular stars,” but suddenly and in brilliant constellations. Of these, the most splendid in modern times have been those which distinguished the age of Lewis XIV and the period of the Revolution in France, the age of George III in England, and in America the years of the Revolution and the second quarter of the present century.

Having thus enumerated the qualities which constitute the orator, let us proceed to notice some of the principal ones more in detail. Of course, it is assumed that he has the necessary stock of knowledge,—a proper fund of information to draw from, both general and particular,—and that with the special information touching his theme his mind is *saturated*. There is no art that can teach a man to be eloquent without knowledge, though some declaimers, who appear, in speaking, to have followed Rousseau’s receipt for a love-letter,—namely to begin without knowing what you are going to say, and to leave off without knowing what you have said,—evidently think otherwise. Cultivation of the voice, memory, and imagination,—attention to style, gesture, and all the arts of speech,—can only render pleasing or impressive the ideas the speaker wishes to communicate; but the materials of his speech,—

the facts and ideas themselves,—must be supplied from other sources than rhetoric. There is no man who may not learn to express, simply and naturally, what is in him; but ten thousand teachers cannot qualify him to express any more, for “oratory, like painting and sculpture, is only a language; it is painting and sculpture made vocal and visible.” \*

It is hardly necessary to say that among the physical gifts of the orator, no one is more important than a good VOICE. There is something at once mysterious and marvellous in the power of that complex structure which we call the vocal organs, to move and mould the hearts of men. The waves of sound, those vibrating molecules which, striking the sensitive membrane of the ear, travel thence to the brain, the seat of thought and passion, have a power to awaken and compel deep hidden sympathies, which, in its magical effects, surpasses any other granted to man. It is true that persons skilled in pantomime can communicate many ideas, and even complicated trains of thought, by gestures alone. Among the Romans in the days of Augustus, both tragedies and comedies, which excited tears and laughter, were acted by pantomime only; and Cicero tells us that there was a dispute between himself and the actor Roscius whether a sentiment could be expressed in a greater va-

\* Theodore Parker, in reply to a gentleman who, in 1851, asked by letter how he could acquire an impressive delivery, replied as follows: “That will depend on qualities that lie a good deal deeper than the surface. It seems to me to depend on vigorous feeling and vigorous thinking, in the first place; on clearness of statement, in the next place; and finally, on a vigorous and natural mode of speech. Vigorous feeling and thinking depend on the original talent a man is born with, and on the education he acquires, or his daily habits. No man can ever be *permanently* an impressive speaker, without being first a man of superior sentiments or superior ideas. Sometimes mere emotion (feeling) impresses, but it soon wearies. Superiority of ideas always commands attention and respect.”

riety of ways by words or by significant gestures. The Brazilians, it is said, express and interchange thought to a surprising degree by facial motions and gesticulation. The fact, however, that such means are little used among persons who can communicate with each other by the tongue, shows that there is no eloquence like that of the voice. The speaking eye, the apt gesture, the written word, and the sculptured or painted image are comparatively dead things; it is the voice that has life,—that has power to thrill, to exalt, to melt, to persuade, and to appal. It is the instrument of passion as well as of thought, and is capable of the most wonderful variety of modulations. By distinct and significant sounds, corresponding to certain signs, the emotions are betrayed; and when these sounds reach the ear simultaneously with the appeals of the looks and gestures to the eye, the effect is irresistible. Even persons who are unaffected by music, are often subdued by the gentle accents of the voice, or roused by its deep intonations.

Lord Chatham owed his supremacy in Parliament to his voice as much as to his other gifts. William Pitt, at the age of twenty-one, ruled the British nation by his voice. It was not the comprehensiveness of his reasonings, the power of his sarcasm, the legislative authority of his manner, but the sonorous depths of his voice,—a voice that filled the House of Commons with its sound,—that contributed most to give him the lead which his haughty genius knew how to keep. Burke, with a far loftier genius, with “an imperial fancy that laid all nature under tribute,” and a memory rich with the spoils of all knowledge, had less influence as an orator, because he lacked a voice. He gave utterance to his magnificent conceptions in

a sort of lofty cry, which tended, it is said, as much as the formality of his discourses, to send his hearers to dinner. It has been justly said that the prodigious power of Mirabeau was in his larynx. He ruled tumultuous assemblies, not by the lightning of his thought, but by the thunder of his throat. Who can tell how far O'Connell was indebted for his power to his wondrous organs of speech? Rising with an easy and melodious swell, his voice filled, says Mr. Lecky, the largest building, and triumphed over the wildest tumult, while at the same time it conveyed every inflection of feeling with the most delicate flexibility.

The late Earl of Derby, one of the most potent orators in the House of Commons, owed his influence not more to his force of argument, the exquisite analytical power with which he could discuss a question, than to his voice. Full and sonorous when deep themes were to be discussed, it was at other times almost as musical as the notes of an oboe. Mr. Gladstone has a voice as silvery as Belial's. When he led the House of Commons, though he spoke for hours together, yet no hoarseness jarred the music of his tones, and the closing sentences were as clear and bell-like in their cadence as the first. A foreigner, who heard him speak one night, declared that, until then, he had never believed that the English was a musical language; but now he was convinced that it was one of the most melodious of all living tongues. Nearly all of our great American orators have been distinguished by similar gifts. Henry Clay's voice had an indescribable charm. It could ring out in trumpet tones, or it could plead in low, plaintive notes, which pierced and thrilled the hearer like the chanting of the Miserere at Rome. It is said that he used to utter the words "The days that are passed and



gone," with such a melancholy beauty of expression, that no one could hear them without a tear. Webster's organ-like voice was a fit vehicle equally for his massive, close-knit arguments and for his impassioned appeals, and it was, quite as much as his majestic presence, one of the secrets of his power. It was deep, rich, musical, flexible, and of prodigious volume and force. In his famous speech in reply to Senator Dickinson of New York,—one of the few occasions on which he lost his temper,—when he declared that no power known to man (to any man but Mr. Dickinson), not even hydrostatic pressure, could compress so big a volume of lies into so small a space as the latter had uttered in a speech which he was even then franking all over the country, Webster pronounced the words in such tones that one of his hearers declared that he felt, all the night afterward, as if a heavy cannonade had been resounding in his ears. Again, in his eulogy on Adams and Jefferson, when, coming to the climax of his description of John Adams's oratory, he raised his body, brought his hands in front of him with a swing, and, stepping to the front of the stage, said, with a broad swell and an imperious surge upward of the gruff tone of his voice, "He spoke onward, right onward,"—he threw into that single word "onward" such a shock of force, that several auditors, who sat directly in front of the stage, found themselves involuntarily half rising from their seats with the start the words gave them. The effect was the greater because exceptional. The orator had been speaking calmly, and rose from the dead level of a passionless delivery.\*

\* "The Golden Age of American Oratory," by E. G. Parker.

The French critic, Sainte-Beuve, in a fine paper on Montalembert, describes his voice, and adds: "I ask pardon for insisting upon these *nuances*; but the ancients, our masters in everything, and particularly in eloquence, noted them

The enormous labor which actors and singers bestow upon the cultivation of their voices, and its magic results, are well known. Three, four, five, and even six years, was not thought too long a period for the artists of the golden age of song, the eighteenth century, to spend in "making" the organ by which they were to win their triumphs. Who has forgotten the story of Caffarelli, who, for five out of the six years in which he was under the instruction of Porpora, practised upon the passages written on a solitary sheet of music-paper? M. Legouv e, of the French Academy, in his amusing and instructive volume on *L'Art de la Lecture*, relates a singular experience of Rachel, which he had from her own lips. One day she recited some tragic passages in the Potsdam gardens before the Emperors of Russia and Germany, the King of Prussia, and several other sovereigns. "That *parterre* of kings," said she, "electrified me. Never did I find more powerful accents,—*my voice enchanted my ears!*" A similar incident, in her own experience, is related by Madam Talma. She states in her *Memoirs* that one day, when she was personating Andromache, she felt herself so profoundly moved, that tears ran, not only from the eyes of all the spectators, but from her own also. The tragedy over, one of her admirers sprang into her box, and, seizing her hand, said: "Oh! my dear friend, that was admirable! It was Andromache herself. I am sure that you imagined you were in Epirus,

minutely; and a great modern orator has said: 'A man's voice is always an index of his mind.' A mind that is clear, pure, firm, generous, and a little disdainful, betrays all these qualities in its voice. Those persons whose voice is not the expressive and sensitive organ of these slightest shades of the inner man, are not made to produce penetrating impressions as orators." There is no doubt that Thomas Jefferson failed as a speaker simply for lack of voice. He had all the other qualifications; but his voice became guttural and inarticulate in moments of great excitement, and the consciousness of this infirmity prevented him from risking his reputation in debate.

and that you were Hector's widow." "I?" she replied laughing, "not the least in the world!" "What, then, made you weep?" "My voice." "How, your voice?" "Yes, my voice. That which touched me was the expression which my voice gave to the griefs of Andromache, not those griefs themselves. That nervous shivering which ran over my body, was the electric shock produced upon my nerves by my own accents. I was at once actress and auditress. I magnetized myself."

It is a remarkable fact that there are actors moderately endowed with mind and soul, who, once upon the stage, compel their hearers both to weep and to think. "Why," asks M. Legouvé, "is this? It is because their voice is intelligent for them. Condemn them to silence, and they would fall back into their natural nothingness. It seems as if there were a little sleeping fairy in their throat, who wakes as soon as they speak, and, touching them with his wand, kindles in them unknown powers. The voice is an invisible actor concealed in the actor, a mysterious reader concealed in the reader, . . . and which serves as blower to both."

The voice being thus the speaker's chief instrument, it is hardly possible for him to take too much pains with its cultivation. It should be clear, distinct, and full; neither squeaking nor harsh, neither a whistle nor a growl, and requiring no push by the will; but capable, easily and naturally, of all the inflections and modulations, from a forte to a pianissimo, which suit the different sentiments it may be required to express. It needs, therefore, a systematic and scientific drill, as truly as do the muscles of the athlete who would excel in physical exercises. Its quality depends, of course, primarily upon the formation of the

chest, the throat, and the mouth; but, though art can do nothing to change the structure of these organs, it can do much to facilitate and strengthen their movements in all that regards breathing, the emission of sound, and pronunciation. Labor strengthens weak voices, renders hard ones flexible, softens harsh ones,—acts, in short, upon the speaker's voice as the practice of the art of song does upon that of the singer. By dint of painstaking a speaker, like a singer, may acquire notes which he lacks. The famous vocalist, Madame Malibran, in singing one day the rondo in the Opera of La Somnambula, ended with a very high trill upon the *ré*, after having begun with the low *ré*. She had embraced three octaves in her vocalism. After the concert, a friend expressed his admiration of the trill: "Oh!" was the reply, "I have sought for it long enough. For three months I have been running after it. I have pursued it everywhere,—while arranging my hair! while dressing! and I found it one morning in the bottom of my shoes, as I was putting them on!"

The example of Kean, the actor, who had by nature a notably feeble voice, shows how much may be accomplished by careful vocal training and cultivation. Talma bestowed incredible pains upon his voice. When young he stammered, his articulation was indistinct, he was quickly fatigued, and his tones were heavy and sepulchral; but so completely did he overcome these defects, that no one who heard him in the maturity of his power suspected their former existence. When Mr. Walsh, the American consul at Paris, heard him utter the words, "The iron reign of the people," he was astonished at their effect. Every word seemed a link in a chain-bolt, it was so hard, and solid, and round. Dr. Porter, of

Andover, the author of an excellent work on Elocution, testifies that even in middle life he went to work and broke up "a stiff and clumsy pair of jaws"; and others declare that "from an effective monotony he passed to a range and flexibility of tone adequate to the highest purposes of the orator." Demosthenes, we know, was unwearied in his efforts to overcome the defects in his organs of speech. He had a weak voice, he stammered, he could not pronounce the first letter of the word which denotes his own profession, the *r* of Rhetor,—a letter which sticks in the throat of many Englishmen and Americans.\* To remedy these defects, he practiced speaking with pebbles in his mouth, ran up-hill as he recited, and declaimed on the sea-shore amid the noise of waves

\* M. Legouvé, in his recent work on "*L'Art de la Lecture*," from which we have already quoted, tells an amusing story of the way in which an actor of his acquaintance conquered this difficult letter. "He was young, he had already some talent as an actor, and he was engaged in two pursuits, unequally dear to him, but equally difficult: he was laboring at the same time to conquer the rolling *r*, and the hand of a young girl with whom he was desperately smitten. Six months of toil had been rewarded with no more success in one case than in the other. The *r* was obstinate in remaining in his throat, and the lady in remaining single. Finally, one day, or rather one evening, after an hour of supplications and of tender protestations, he touches the rebellious heart; the lady says yes! Drunk with joy, he hurriedly descends the stair-case, and, in passing the porter's lodge, he hurls at him a sonorous and triumphant: '*Cordon, s'il vous plait!*' ('Open, if you please!') The *r* of *cordon* has a pure and vibrating sound, like an Italian *r*! The fear seizes him that perhaps it is but a happy accident. He repeats it; the same success! He can no longer doubt it; the rolling *r* is his! And to whom does he owe it? To her whom he adores. It is the intoxication of the happy passion which has wrought this miracle! And see,—he returns home, repeating all along the way, for he is always afraid of losing his conquest: '*Cordon, s'il vous plait! Cordon, s'il vous plait! Cordon, s'il vous plait!*' Suddenly a new incident occurs; as he turns a street corner, there leaps forth from under his feet,—from a hole,—an enormous rat! A rat? Another *r*! He adds it to the other; he joins them together; he shouts them together: '*Un rat! (a rat) Cordon! Cordon! Un gros rat! (a great rat) Cordon! un gros rat! un gros rat! un gros rat!*' And the *r*'s roll, and the street re-sounds with them. He returns home triumphant. He has vanquished the two rebels. He is loved, and he vibrates! Let us entitle this chapter: *Of the Influence of Love on Articulation.*"

and storms. All the ancient orators, indeed, whether because they had to speak to the multitude, whose senses must be struck, and on whom power and brilliancy of voice have a great effect, or, because they bestowed far more care on all the branches of the oratorical art, attached far greater importance to vocal culture than modern speakers. Quintilian contemptuously dismisses those elocutionists who advocate the exclusive use of a simple conversational mode of speaking by saying: "It was not assuredly in a straight-forward tone of voice that Demosthenes swore by the defenders of Marathon and Plataea and Salamis, nor was it in the monotonous strain of daily talk that Æschines bewailed the fate of Thebes."

The necessity of careful attention to the cultivation of the voice, even by those who care only for rhetorical effects, is strikingly shown by its connection with style. It has been justly said that a tenor song, though you transpose it a fifth lower, will not suit a bass singer; and so the style of speaking which may be very effective for a man with a shrill, keen voice, may be absolutely grotesque if attempted by a man whose voice is rich and deep and full. You cannot play on the flute a piece of music written for the bass viol. Again, a man who speaks always in a feeble, low voice,—so feeble and low that "each one of his sentences seems like a poor, scared mouse running for its hole,"—will come at last to write as feebly as he speaks. "Observation," says Professor H. N. Day, "abundantly shows how a naturally imaginative and highly impassioned style may be gradually changed into one that is dry and tame by the continual influence of the conviction that we are not able appropriately to

deliver strongly impassioned discourse. A conscious power and skill to express with effect the most highly-wrought discourse will, on the other hand, ever be stimulating to the production of it." There are instances, undoubtedly, of weak-lunged speakers, who, owing to a hereditary feebleness of constitution, can never, by any amount of vocal culture, attain to great vocal power. The example of Cotta, however, as he is described by Cicero, shows that such need not despair of success in oratory: "As he very prudently avoided every forcible exertion of his voice, on account of the weakness of his lungs, so his language was equally adapted to the delicacy of his constitution. Though he was scarcely able, and therefore never attempted, to force the passions of his judges by a strong and spirited delivery, yet he managed them so artfully that the gentle emotions he raised in them answered the same purpose and produced the same effect as the violent ones which were excited by Sulpicius."

The defects of a feeble or husky voice may be redeemed, to a great extent, by distinct articulation. The part which this quality plays in good oratory, as well as in good reading and acting, is immense. Clearness, energy, passion, vehemence, all depend more or less upon articulation. There have been actors of the first order who have had voices as feeble as a mouse's. Monvel, the famous French actor, had scarcely any voice; he had not even teeth! And yet, according to high authority, not only did his hearers never lose one of his words, but no artist had ever more pathos or fascination. The secret of his success was his exquisite articulation. "The most admirable reader," says M. Legouv e, "I ever knew, was M. Andrieux. Yet his voice was more than weak; it was

faint, husky, hoarse. . . . How did he triumph over so many defects? By articulation. It was said that he made himself understood by dint of making himself heard." The same writer adds that there are readers, orators, and actors, to whom the very richness of their voices is an inconvenience. As they know not how to articulate, the sound devours the word. The vowels devour the consonants. Such persons make so much noise in reading and speaking that nobody understands them.

It is remarkable that, dependent as we are upon the organs of speech for the communication of our ideas and feelings, we know so little of the secret of the working of these organs. Anatomists have dissected and laid bare all the details of their complex and wondrous structure,—they have shown the formation of the larynx, with its muscles, cartilages, membranes, and tracery, by which the vocal sounds are modulated,—but of the connection of these organs with the effect produced, they have told us almost nothing. The researches of the subtlest science are here unavailing. We know that every voice has its natural bell-tone, which makes it a bass voice, a tenor, or a soprano, and that between these are various intermediate gradations; and there our knowledge ends. Of all these, the middle voice or tenor, as Bautain observes, is the most favorable for speaking, both because it maintains itself the best, and, when well articulated, reaches the farthest. The upper voice is undesirable because it continually tends to a scream. Only the highest intellectual gifts, with great personal magnetism and other compensations, can atone for this blemish. A bass voice is with difficulty pitched high, and continually tends downward. Grave and majestic at the outset, it soon



grows heavy and monotonous; it has magnificent chords, but, if long listened to, produces often the effect of a drone, and soon tires and lulls to sleep by the medley of commingling sounds. If coarse and violent, it deafens and stuns the ear; and when thundering in a vast building in which echoes exist, the billows of sound, reverberating from every side, blend together, should the orator be speaking fast, and the result is a deafening confusion and an acoustic chaos.

The middle voice, for the very reason that it is in the middle of the scale, has the largest resources for inflection, since it can rise or sink with greater ease than the other tones, and thus allow greater play to expression. Possessing a greater variety of intonations than the other voices, it is less liable to monotony, and holds the attention of the hearer, who is so prone to doze. But whatever be the tone of the voice, the most desirable quality it can possess for the purposes of the public speaker, is to be *sympathetic*. The great merit of this voice is, that not only, by its siren tones, does it propitiate and win the hearer in advance, but it exerts a steady fascination, a magnetic influence, which draws and fastens his attention to the end, as if by some magic spell. "It is a secret virtue which is in speech, and which penetrates at once, or little by little, through the ear to the heart of those who listen, charms them, and holds them beneath the charm, to such a degree that they are disposed, not only to listen, but even to admit what is said, and to receive it with confidence. It is a voice which inspires an affection for him who speaks, and puts you instinctively on his side, so that his words find an echo in the mind,

repeating there what he says, and reproducing it easily in the understanding and heart."\*

It is not our business in this work to point out the various faults of speakers in the management of the voice, such as lack of proper modulation, indistinct articulation, speaking too slowly or too rapidly, or in a constant monotone. All this belongs to a professional treatise. But there is one fault so common, especially with young speakers, and in our western courts and public assemblies, that we cannot forbear noticing it. The great majority, confounding loudness with force, speak in too high a key. Like *Æschines*, as accused by *Demosthenes*, when the former, at the close of his oration on the crown, bawled and mouthed *ὦ Γῆ, καὶ Ἥλιε*, etc., they seem to consider eloquence as an affair of the *lungs*. It is a great mistake to suppose that he who speaks in the loudest tones can be heard the farthest or the most easily. *Gardiner*, in his "Music of Nature," notes a curious fact in the history of sound:—

"The loudest notes always perish on the spot where they are produced, whereas musical notes will be heard at a great distance. Thus, if we approach within a mile or two of a town or village in which a fair is held, we may hear very faintly the clamor of the multitude, but more distinctly the organs, and other musical instruments which are played for their amusement. If a *Cremona violin*, a real *Amati*, be played by the side of a modern fiddle, the latter will sound much louder than the former; but the sweet, brilliant tone of the *Amati* will be heard at a distance the other cannot reach. *Dr. Young*, on the authority of *Durham*, states that at *Gibraltar* the human voice may be heard at a greater distance than that of any other animal; thus, when the cottager in the woods, or the open plain, wishes to call her husband, who is working at a distance, she does not shout, but pitches her voice to a musical key, which she knows from habit, and by that means reaches his ear. The loudest roar of the largest lion could not penetrate so far."

The same writer states that when *Paganini* played in

\* The remarks in this and the preceding paragraph, upon the different qualities of voices, are abridged from the admirable work of *M. Bautain*, on "The Art of Extempore Speaking."

England, the connoisseurs did not seek the nearest seats, but preferred more retired places, where his exquisite instrumentation overrode the storm of the orchestra.

Besides the difficulty of being heard distinctly, there are other objections to using the high notes, except rarely, in speaking. Not only do they become shrill and harsh by excessive use, but the very thought of the speaker may be affected by it. The celebrated French advocate, M. Berryer, attributes the loss of an excellent law-case to his having begun his pleading, unconsciously, on too high a key. The fatigue of his larynx communicated itself speedily to his temples; from the temples it passed to the brain; his mind refused to act with vigor, because its organ was overstrained; his thoughts became confused; and the great lawyer lost the full command of his intellectual faculties, and with it of his case, because he had not thought of coming down from the perch to which his voice had climbed at the beginning of his speech.

Some years ago a writer in a public journal, in speaking of an address read by Dr. Orville Dewey, described his impressions thus: "And such reading! quiet and unpretentious, but with such appropriate feeling and intense expressiveness! I was not prepared for such a really powerfully essay with so little show of power. I better understand the mightiness of the still small voice, and recognize an oratory in condensed feeling and subdued tones, greater than the most showy rhetoric and the stormiest bluster."

What a pity it is that we have so few such readers in our pulpits! The besetting sin of our preaching to-day is that it is too declamatory. In nine cases out of ten it needs to be more conversational. If you want to speak

well, said Brougham to a young Etonian, you must first learn to talk well. Not that the heights of eloquence can be reached by this style, or that there are not cases where the preacher must lighten and thunder as well as plead. There are themes which call for denunciation and indignant invective, and then only the sharp and ringing tones that belong to the upper register will do. Again, a voice of mediocre power may captivate senates, but only a mighty voice can move a multitude. Of what use would the flute-like voice of Everett have been to O'Connell in his "hill-side stormings?" Beecher has well said that "there are cases in which by a single explosive tone a man will drive home a thought as a hammer drives a nail." But bursts of oratory are necessarily the exception, not the rule, in a sermon; moreover, few have the genius for them; and therefore we believe that there would be a great gain of power, if *ordinarily* the preacher would simply *talk* to his hearers as a man talks to his friend. At any rate, when he does pitch his voice on a high key, he should have a better reason for so doing than old Dr. Beecher had on a certain Sunday. Coming home from church, he said to his son Henry, who tells the anecdote: "It seems to me I never made a worse sermon than I did this morning." "Why, father," said Henry, "I never heard you preach so loud in all my life." "That is the way," said the Doctor; "I always holloa when I haven't anything to say!"

It has been justly said by some writer, that almost every one is surprised on first hearing Wendell Phillips. You are looking for a man who is all art, all thunder. Lo! a quiet man glides on to the platform, and begins talking in a simple, easy, conversational way; presently he makes you smile at some happy turn, then he startles you

by a rapier-like thrust, then he electrifies you by a grand outburst of feeling. "You listen, believe, applaud. And that is Wendell Phillips. That is also oratory,—to produce the greatest effect by the quietest means." We cannot all be Phillipses: but we can all copy his naturalness, earnestness, and simplicity; and what a gain even that would be to the great majority of preachers! Their main fault is not that they cannot read Greek and Hebrew, but that they cannot read English. As the best music, badly played, makes wretched melody, so false or spiritless elocution degrades the finest composition to a level with the worst. The celebrated Dr. Laurence, the associate of Burke and Fox, spoke so badly, in such an unvarying monotone, as completely to neutralize the effect which his thought and learning were fitted to produce. Fox said that a man should listen, if possible, to a speech of the Doctor's, and then speak it over again himself; it must, he thought, succeed infallibly, for it was sure to be admirable of itself, and of being new to the audience. While such are the effects of a languid, drawling delivery, who, on the other hand, does not know the sorcery that lies in a skillful utterance, which properly distributes the lights and shadows of a musical intonation? By sonorous depth and melodious cadences,—by a distinct articulation, which chisels and engraves the thoughts,—even the most trivial sentiments may be invested with a force and fascination almost irresistible. As a good singer cares little for the words of a song, knowing that he can make any words glorious, so the orator can infuse power and pathos into the tamest language. There is hardly any person familiar with pulpit eloquence who does not know that some of the profoundest and most scholarly discourses,—discourses which, when

read, seem full of concentrated thought and vigorous expression,—have fallen almost powerless from the lips of their authors, while a single verse of Scripture, or a line from an old and familiar hymn, coming from the lips of another man, has acted like an electric shock, “tearing and shattering the heart,” to use De Quincey’s figure, “with volleying discharges, peal after peal.”\*

Of all the qualifications of the orator which we have named, none is more essential than energy,—physical and intellectual FORCE. Cicero sums up the whole art of speaking in four words,—*aptè, distinctè, ornatè dicere*; to speak to the purpose, to speak clearly and distinctly, to speak gracefully. To-day it is important also to speak with force. This is especially requisite to-day, because the age itself is full of force, and therefore impatient of feebleness. By force we mean the energy (etymologically, the inward-workingness,) with which the speaker employs his various abilities to make us see and feel that which he would impress upon our minds. It is not a single faculty, but the whole strength of his soul bearing upon ours. It was this quality to which Demosthenes must have referred in

\* It is a common error to suppose that special attention to elocution leads to affectation and mannerism. The very reverse is the fact. Affectation is the result of untaught efforts at a late age to rid one’s self of the vulgarisms, provincialisms, slovenliness, indistinctness, and other faults of school-boy days. The reason why so many persons who study elocution fail to profit by it, is that they begin too late. The rustic who late in life apes the gentleman, is sure to be affected; not so with him who is “to the manner born.” Let all persons who are to be public speakers be trained early and scientifically in the management of their voices, as an essential part of their education,—let them be drilled and practised for years, till they have acquired the last great art, that of concealing art,—and we shall no longer listen to discourses which, like Milton’s infernal gates, grate on our ears “harsh thunder,” or which, like Shelley’s waves on the sea-shore, breathe over the slumbering brain a dull monotony, but to a pleasing, forcible, and effective delivery, “musical as is Apollo’s lute”; and “sore throats,” the result of unnatural tones and straining, will disappear from the catalogue of clerical ills.

his reiterated *ἐνθουσιασμός*,—the “action, action, action,” on which he laid such stress. A speech may be packed full of thought, tersely and felicitously expressed; its facts may be apt, its style elegant, and its logic without a flaw; and yet if it lack fire and spirit, or if it be tamely delivered, it will make but a weak impression. On the other hand, a production which is intellectually far inferior to it,—which is full of bad rhetoric and worse logic,—which is one-sided in its views, and made up of the most hackneyed material,—will make a powerful impression for the hour (which is commonly the end of speaking), if the orator be energetic, and infuse that energy into his performance. As in political administration errors and even gross blunders are pardoned, if the main end is attained, so a speech may be full of faults, and yet be successful, if it be full of energy.

Force is partly a physical product, and partly mental; it is the life of oratory, which gives it breath, and fire, and power. It is the electrical element, that which smites, penetrates, and thrills. While listening to a speaker who has this property of eloquence, “our minds seem to be pricked as with needles, and pierced as with javelins.” It does not necessarily imply vehemence. There may be energy, as we shall presently show, in suppressed feeling, in deep pathos, in simple description, nay, even in silence itself. There is often an appearance of energy where there is no reality,—a tug and strain to be forcible, without calm inward power. “The aspiration is infinite, but the performance is infinitesimal.” In the highest examples of energy, there is no appearance of exertion; we see only power “half-leaning on its own right arm,” the Athlete conquering without a visible strain or contortion. In Guido’s picture of St. Michael piercing the dragon, while

the gnarled muscles of the arm and hand attest the utmost strain of the strength, the countenance remains placid and serene.

Demosthenes, if we may judge by an oft-quoted saying of an enemy, must have had an almost superhuman force. "What," exclaimed Æschines to the Rhodians, when they applauded the recital of the speech which caused his banishment,—“what if you had heard the *monster* himself?” Lord Chatham's oratory was strikingly characterized by force. A large part of his success was due to his imperial positiveness of character. Possessing a vigorous, acute, and comprehensive intellect, he saw at a glance what most men discover by laborious processes of reasoning, and flashed his thoughts upon other minds with the vividness, rapidity, and abruptness with which they arose in his own. Scorning the slow, formal methods of the logician, he crushed together proof and statement in the same sentence, and reached his conclusions at a single bound. As John Foster said, “he struck on the results of reasoning as a cannon-shot strikes the mark, without your seeing its course through the air.” Lord Brougham is a yet more signal example of this quality in oratory, because he owes his victories almost to it alone. Possessing little personal magnetism,—at least, of the kind that fascinates and charms; careless in his statements, inaccurate in his quotations, lame in his logic, and intensely partisan in his views; displaying little literary skill in the composition of his speeches, which are often involved and sometimes lumbering in style, and almost always devoid of elegance or polish; addicted to exaggeration and a kind of hyperbolical iteration in which there is sometimes “more potter than power”; he is yet, in spite of these faults, one of the most



potent and successful orators of the century, simply because of his intense, gladiator-like energy. All his discourses throb and palpitate with a robust life.

Even Chatham and Brougham were, if possible, surpassed in force,—at least, in the union of physical and intellectual energy,—by the master-spirit of the French Revolution. The orator of all the ages most remarkable for force was Mirabeau. It seemed, at times, as if the iron chain of his argument were fastened to an electric battery, every link of which gave you a shock. William Wirt tells us that President Jefferson, who heard Mirabeau while minister to France, spoke of him as uniting two distinct and perfect characters in himself, whenever he pleased,—the mere logician, with a mind apparently as desolate and sterile as the sands of Arabia, but reasoning at such times with an *Herculean force* which nothing could resist; and, at other times, bursting forth with a flood of eloquence more sublime than Milton ever imputed to the seraphim and cherubim, and bearing all before him. The same force characterized the speaking of Chief Justice Marshall, when at the bar. No matter what the question; though ten times more knotty than “the gnarled oak,” he penetrated at once to its core,—to the point on which the controversy depended; and seizing the attention with irresistible energy, he never permitted it to elude his grasp, until he had forced his convictions on his hearers.

It is to his energy that the so-called *natural* orator owes his power over his fellow-men. It is in his strength and intensity of character,—in his determined will, his triumphant self-assertion, his positiveness and overbearingness,—that lurks his magic. By the sheer force of enthusiasm and animal passion,—by his glowing periods and “sen-

tences of a venturous edge,"—he rouses audiences to a pitch of excitement to which the polished and dainty rhetorician seeks to uplift them in vain. Some one has said that eloquence is a sort of majesty, a species of kingly power; and men acknowledge the mastery of those only who have in their natures a strong element of self-assertion. The very authority, and even audacity with which they affirm a thing, makes half the world believe it true. In like manner, the principal, if not the sole cause of the success of the radical orator of the present day, is his force. "He is a man of one lone idea, and if this happens to be a great and fundamental one, as it sometimes does, it is apprehended upon one of its sides only. As a consequence, he is an intense man, a forcible man. His utterances penetrate. It is true that there are among this class some of less earnest spirit, and less energetic temper; amateur reformers, who wish to make an impression upon the public mind from motives of mere vanity. Such men are exceedingly feeble, and soon desist from their undertaking. For while the common mind is ever ready, too ready, to listen to a really earnest and forcible man, even though his force proceeds from a wrong source, and sets in an altogether wrong direction, it yet loathes a lukewarm earnestness, a counterfeited enthusiasm. One of the most telling characters, in one of the most brilliant English comedies, is Forcible Feeble. Take away from the man who goes now by the name of reformer,—the half-educated man who sees the truth but not the *whole* truth,—take away from him his force, and you take away his muscular system. He instantaneously collapses into a flabby pulp."

It was well observed some years ago, by an American

orator who had closely studied his art, that the florid and Asiatic style of eloquence is not the taste of the age. The strong, and even the rugged and the abrupt, he asserted, are far more successful. "Bold propositions, boldly and briefly expressed,—pithy sentences,—nervous common sense,—strong phrases,—the *felicité audax*, both in language and conception,—well compacted periods,—sudden and strong masses of light,—an apt adage in English or Latin,—a keen sarcasm,—a merciless personality,—a mortal thrust,—these are the beauties and deformities that now make a speaker the most interesting."\* "In your arguments at the bar," he says again, addressing a young friend, "*let argument strongly predominate*. Sacrifice your flowers, and let your columns be Doric, rather than Composite,—the better medium is Ionic. Avoid, as you would the gates of death, the reputation of floridity. Small though your body, let the march of your mind be the stride of a seven-leagued giant."

Energy is greatly increased by *interrogation*. A hearer who is listless while assertions only are made, will often prick up his ears when he is appealed to by a question. Cicero begins his first oration against Catiline in this way, and Demosthenes employs this figure with great effect in his *Philippics*, and in the speech on the Crown: "Will you continue to go about to each other and ask, What's the news? Can anything be more new than that a man from Macedonia should subjugate Greece? Is Philip dead? No, indeed; but he is ill. What matters it to you?—to you, who, if he were to come to grief, would quickly get yourselves another Philip?" Chat-

\* William Wirt,— "Memoirs" by J. P. Kennedy, 1849.

ham, in one of his superb outbursts, demands, "Who is the man that . . . has dared to authorize and associate to our arms the tomahawk and scalping-knife of the savage?" Cicero tells us that the very enemies of Gracchus could not help weeping, when he delivered this passage: "Whither shall such a miserable wretch as I betake myself? Whither shall I turn? To the Capitol? But that swims with my brother's blood. Shall I go to my own house? Would I not there see my mother, miserable, wailing, and degraded?"

*Exclamation and apostrophe*, which suppose great intensity of emotion, add very much to energy. To be effective, the apostrophe should be brief, and, apparently, from the impulse of the moment; else, in the one case, there will be no illusion, or, in the other, it will quickly vanish. There is hardly any other figure which requires so much skill to manage it, or in which failure makes a speaker so ridiculous. Among the most celebrated oratorical apostrophes may be mentioned that of Demosthenes to the manes of the heroes who fell at Marathon, that of Æschines to Thebes, and that of Cicero in his oration against Verres, in which he describes the crucifixion of a Roman citizen. There are also striking examples of apostrophe raised to vision in the peroration of Robert Hall's Sermon on the Threatened Invasion of 1803, and in the famous passage in Erskine's defense of Stockdale, in which he introduces the Indian Chief.

*Gesture* is almost essential to energetic speaking; we say almost, for we remember that some speakers have made hardly a gesture, and yet have delivered themselves with the greatest excitement and passion, and produced a deep and abiding impression. The history of

eloquence shows that gesticulation is a most powerful exponent of emotion, and may add almost incredible force to the utterance of the tongue. Who that has seen a Kean or a Siddons, a Clay, a Choate, or a Gough, can be ignorant of the increased significance which may be given to words by a glance of the eye, a motion, or a wave of the hand? Gavazzi moved English audiences by his looks and gestures alone. Some fifty years ago there was an eloquent Lutheran clergyman in Baltimore whose action was so impressive, that a highly cultivated Massachusetts clergyman who heard him preach, but who was wholly ignorant of the German language in which he spoke, was moved to tears. The hearer felt confident that the discourse was upon the Prodigal Son, and, upon leaving the church, was told that such was the fact. Daniel Webster was usually parsimonious of gestures, but those which he chose to make were often signally apt and telling. In speaking of the Buffalo platform in 1848, he said: "It is so rickety that it will hardly bear the fox-like tread of Mr. Van Buren." As he said "fox-like tread," he held out the palm of his left hand, and with the other played his fingers along his extended arm down to the hand, with a soft running motion, as if to represent the kitten-like advance of the foxy advocate upon his rickety platform. A shout of laughter testified to the aptness of this sign-teaching.

The speaker who feels his subject deeply will feel it in his very finger-tips. Even the foot, in giving expression to violent emotion, or in giving attitude and dignity to the figure, is no mean auxiliary to the other organs. Among the ancients the *supplisio pedis*, or stamping of the foot, was one of the commonest and most moderate gestures. Quintilian even asserts that gesture is com-

monly more expressive than the voice. He adds that, without the hands, delivery would be maimed and feeble. Other parts of the body aid the speaker, but the hands themselves speak: "Do we not with them ask, promise, call, threaten, detest, fear, interrogate, deny? Do we not with them express joy, sorrow, doubt, penitence, moderation, abundance, number, time? And, amidst the great diversity of tongues, in all races and nations, is not this language common to all men?"\*

Profound feeling or violent passion is rarely satisfied with any expression of itself that is possible in mere words; it feels itself to be "cribbed and confined" till it can find an outlet in some apt bodily act or emotion. Such acts are even more truly than words the language of nature, though they may not be as significant. It is for this reason that oratory, in its power of expression, is so superior to all the other arts. Addressing themselves as they do exclusively to one or the other of "the two artsenses,"—poetry and music to the ear, painting and sculpture to the eye, only,—they must yield the palm to oratory, which addresses itself at once both to the ear and to the eye, and has thus a twofold means of impression. Not only is gesture more expressive, in many cases, than words, but it is also more rapid and sudden in its effects than the aptest language can be. It has been truly said that the sidelong glance, the drooping lid, the expanded nostril, the curving lip, are more instantaneously eloquent than any mere expression of disdain; and the starting eye-ball and open mouth tell more of terror than the most abject words. M. Charma, in his *Essai sur le Lan-*

\* For a full treatment of this subject, see the excellent "Manual of Gesture," by Albert M. Bacon, A.M., published by S. C. Griggs & Co., Chicago.

*gaze*, tells an anecdote of the actor Talma, that, disgusted at the disproportion of praise which was attributed to the words of the poets, by which he produced in the theatre such thrilling effects, he one day, in the midst of a gay circle of friends, suddenly retreated a step, passed his hand over his forehead, and gave to his voice and figure the expression of the profoundest despair. The assembly grew silent, pale, and shuddering, as though *Œdipus* had appeared among them, when, as by a lightning-flash, his parricide was revealed to him, or as though the avenging Furies had suddenly startled them with their gleaming torches. Yet the words which the actor spoke with that aspect of consternation and voice of anguish formed but the fragment of a nursery song, and the effects of action triumphed over those produced by words.\*

Of course, gesticulation may be overdone, like emphasis, in which case it only enfeebles the thought. To be effective, it should be prompt and instinctive, now easy and quiet, now strong and animated, but always graceful and natural. A single gesture in a passage, if it be apt and telling, will often produce more effect than a dozen equally significant. Too little gesture is as unnatural as too much. It is strange that the happy medium is so rarely observed, considering that every child is an illustration of its proper use, and that we may see examples of it in almost every man that talks to his neighbor on the street. There are few speakers who do not impair the effect of their gesticulation by some excess or mannerism. One orator gesticulates with his left hand chiefly; another keeps his elbows pinioned to his sides; another enforces his arguments by pommelling the desk or

\* "Chapters on Language," by Rev. F. W. Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., p. 67-8.

table at frequent intervals; another uses his hands "as if he had claws, pawing with them"; another cannot utter a sentence without sawing himself backward and forward, like the mast of a yacht at anchor; another folds his arms over his chest, *à la Pitt*; another has a trick of rising often on tiptoe, as if he had been accustomed to addressing his audience over a high wall; another paces the platform to and fro, like a wild beast in a cage; and another, despairing, after many attempts, of suiting the action to the word, thrusts the means of action, his hands, into his breeches pockets. It has been observed that young speakers are especially apt to overdo in gesture, reminding one, by the constant motion of their arms, of the flapping of a pair of wings. At one of the Intercollegiate Contests in the Academy of Music, in New York city, it was noticed that some of the students had scarcely advanced to the front of the stage, before they went "flying all abroad."

*Expression of countenance* is essential to energy. Not only the hands, but the eyes, the lips, even the nostrils should speak, for this is the universal language of nature, which needs no dictionary or interpreter. There is a tradition that the famous conspiracy of the Sicilian vespers was organized wholly by facial signs, not even the hands,—the *loquacissimæ manus, linguosi digiti*, as Cassiodorus calls them,—being employed. The eye is so expressive that it is said that gamblers rely upon the study of it, to discover the state of an opponent's game, more than upon any other means. No rules can be laid down upon this subject; it is enough to say that the facial expressions should correspond to the sentiments uttered, and this, where there is deep feeling, may safely be left to nature.



Energy depends much upon *the choice and number of words*. Cicero, who loved a copious style, tells us that he never heard of a Lacedaemonian orator; and it is certain that a succession of epigrammatic sayings, or aphorisms, would be a very poor speech. When an orator is full of his subject, and his mind is swelling with the thoughts, and his soul with the feelings which his theme inspires, until there is a fountain-head of ideas pressing at his lips for utterance, he will not express himself in a series of curt sentences, however pithy or pointed. If there is a tide in his soul, there will be a flow in his eloquence, and he will not dam it up in pools by too frequent periods. Nevertheless, it is a rule, as Southey says, that it is with words as with sunbeams; the more they are condensed the deeper they burn. Sir Joshua Reynolds says that Titian knew how to place upon the canvas the image and character of any object he attempted, by a few strokes of the pencil, and that he thus produced a truer representation than any of his predecessors who finished every hair. So the great orators, Henry, Chatham, Erskine, wrought. They grouped instead of analyzing, and produced, by a few master-touches, effects which pre-Raphaelite minuteness and laborious finish would have marred. This suggestive speaking, which, instead of exhausting subjects and explaining everything to death, leaves much to the imagination, is demanded now even more imperiously than in the days of Chatham. Men think and act quickly, with all their faculties on the alert; and the long-winded speeches and discourses, with endless divisions and subdivisions, to which men listened patiently two centuries ago, would now be regarded as utterly intolerable. Let the young speaker, then, prune away all redundant

words, all parasitical epithets, using only those that double and triple the force of the substantive. Be chary of words and phrases; economize them as a miser does his eagles. "The people," says a French writer, "affect those thoughts that are formulated in a single word. They like such expressions as the following,—*vive!* . . . *à bas!* . . . *mort!* . . . *vengeance!* . . . *liberté!* . . . *justice!* The harangues of Napoleon lasted only a few minutes, yet they electrified whole armies. The speech at Bordeaux did not exceed a quarter of an hour, and yet it resounded throughout the world."

An eloquent preacher\* has remarked that energy should be *accrescent*. Nothing seizes the attention of an audience better than a gentle beginning. Of course, a speaker should be in earnest from the very start, his looks, action, bearing, and tones of voice all indicating that he has something important to communicate, and that he is anxious to communicate it. Still, "his energy should gradually rise in thought, language and manner. His hearers are not prepared to sympathize with him at once; and, then, his vehemence appears impertinent. It is far better to win their attention by a gentler method; nay, even to lull them, husbanding all our resources of power until their attention is fairly enchained, and then to sweep them on with us, never suffering their interest to flag. Some have the talent of taking an audience by storm, but it is very difficult to keep up the excitement, and, in a failure to do so, the thoughts that follow are made to seem weaker than they really are, by the contrast. There should be a continual ascent to the close, that close being the most impressive of all. . . . Be sure that the final sentence leaves every

\* George W. Bethune, D.D.

soul vibrating like a swept harp." The famous passage on Universal Emancipation in Curran's defense of Rowan is a fine specimen of climacteric energy. As sentence follows after sentence, each heightens and deepens the effect, till the passage closes with the magnificent climax at the end, like the swell and crash of an orchestra. Erskine was peculiarly happy in thus aggravating and intensifying the force of his appeals. As we read his jury addresses, we see that he never for a moment dissipates or scatters his force, but compels rill after rill, stream after stream, of fact and argument, to flow together, "each small, perhaps, in itself, but all contributing to swell the mighty flood that bursts upon us in the cataract of his conclusion." It is said of an eloquent and successful Boston preacher, that as he was about to close his discourse, there was no such visible gathering up of his forces as pointed to a climax, but the result of all he had said was rolled and hammered into a few short sentences, shot with the crack and directness of a rifle,—and the sermon was ended. So cleverly was the work done, that the hearer went away with hardly a thought of the preacher or his performance, but with a divine thought lodged in his mind, which he would carry with him to his grave.

## CHAPTER IV.

### QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ORATOR (*continued*).

**A**MONG the faculties demanded by the orator, few are more essential to high success than a lively IMAGINATION. He needs this not only that he may be able to fix his plan well in his mind and retain it there, but in order that he may have clear, distinct, and vivid conceptions of that which he wishes to say, and may be able to put both his premeditated thought and any new thought that occurs to him instantly into language at the first stroke. It must not be supposed that the tropes and illustrations which the imagination supplies are purely ornamental. The difference between languid speaking and vivid oratory depends largely upon the quality of the speaker's imagination. The plumage of the eagle supports it in its flight. It is not by naked, bold statements of fact, but by pictures that make them *see* the facts, that assemblies are moved. Put an argument into concrete shape,—into a lively image, or into “some hard phrase, round and solid as a ball, which men can see and handle and carry home,”—and your cause is half won. Rufus Choate used to say that no train of thought is too deep, too subtle, or too grand, for a popular audience, if the thought is rightly presented to them. It should be conveyed, he said, in anecdote, or sparkling truism, or telling illustration, or stinging epithet,—never in a logical, abstract shape.

Aristotle has well said that "the *metaphor* is the orator's figure, the simile is the poet's." He further observes that mere names carry to the mind of the hearer their specific meaning, and there they end; but metaphors do more than this, for they awaken new thoughts. He might have added that metaphors charm the fancy, and are, therefore, a great help to the memory. They deepen the impression of the sentiments, and fix them in the affections. The superiority, in value, of the metaphor to the simile, for the speaker's uses, is that it is swift and glancing, flashing its light instantaneously, without ever for a moment impeding the flow of the thought. Unlike the thoughts, the tropes and figures of the orator are rarely elaborated, but drop spontaneously from his tongue in moments of inspiration. He *thinks* in metaphor. He can no more invent them than he can, by taking thought, add a cubit to his stature. Of all the orators of ancient or modern times, Burke was the greatest master of this figure, which he employs sometimes to excess. Probably no prose style ever went so near to the verge of poetry without going over, as his; "it may be said," says Hazlitt, "to pass yawning gulfs 'on the unsteady footing of a spear'; still it has an actual resting-place and tangible support under it,—it is not suspended on nothing. It differs from poetry, as I conceive, like the chamois from the eagle: it climbs to an almost equal height, touches upon a cloud, overlooks a precipice, is picturesque, sublime,—but all the while, instead of soaring through the air, it stands upon a rocky cliff, clambers up by abrupt and intricate ways, and browses on the roughest bark or crops the tender flower." What can be grander than the comparison of the British

constitution to "the proud keep of Windsor, rising in the majesty of proportion, and girt with the double belt of its kindred and coeval powers," etc.?—what more unique or felicitous than the Abbe Sieyes's far-famed "pigeon-holes," or the picture of the Duke of Bedford as "the Leviathan, tumbling about his unwieldy bulk in the ocean of the royal bounty?"—or what bolder and more striking than the application of Milton's description of Sin, to the half-bright, half-terrible phenomena of the French Revolution, which was crowned, as it rose, with all the radiance of intellect, but closed in massacre and horror?

Curran was a great master of metaphor. The saying of Pericles that "metaphors are often lamps which light nothing, and show only the nakedness of the walls against which they are hung," had no application to him. Often his reasonings were so couched in figures, that if you took away the one you destroyed the other. Sometimes he seemed for a moment to soar away from his theme in flights of imagination; but, however high he flew, he always came back to it with additional force, and the images he employed not only quickened attention, but lent vividness to the ideas he wished to impress. With what force and splendor is the thought in the following passage, in his defense of Rowan, flashed upon the mind by the aptness of the illustration: "This (the origin and object of government) is a kind of subject which I feel overawed when I approach. There are certain fundamental principles which nothing but necessity should expose to public examination. They are pillars, the depth of whose foundation you cannot explore, without endangering their strength." How felicitous is the image used by Sheil,

when, alluding to the spirit of liberty rising from the lower to the upper orders, he says: "At length they have learned to participate in the popular sentiment; the spirit by which the great body of the people is actuated has risen to the higher classes, and the fire which has so long lain in the lower region of society has burst at length from its frozen summits." Not inferior to this is the fine figure of Plunket: "Time is the great destroyer of evidence, but he is the great protector of titles. He comes with a scythe in one hand, to mow down the muniments of our possessions, while he holds an hour-glass with the other, from which he incessantly metes out the portions of duration which are to render the muniments no longer necessary." But none of these flowers of fancy, however dazzling or daring, surpass in beauty Daniel Webster's imagery, in the famous tribute to the Revolutionary Fathers: "They went to war against a preamble. . . . On this question of principle, while actual suffering was as yet afar off, they raised their flag against a power, to which, for purposes of foreign conquest and subjugation, Rome, in the height of her glory, is not to be compared, . . . a power which has dotted(over)the surface of the whole globe with her possessions and military posts; whose morning drum-beat, following the sun, and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth daily with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England."

As nothing is more effective in oratory than imagery, so nothing is more dangerous when uncontrolled by good sense. Many an orator, in the very whirlwind of his eloquence, has convulsed his hearers with laughter by some incongruous metaphor that has dissipated every serious feeling,—“bringing down the house” in a way as un-

pleasant as unexpected. Curran, in speaking of Phillips's oratory, in which tropes of every form were mixed up profusely and in inextricable confusion, gave a pregnant warning to all speakers: "My dear Tom, it will never do for a man to turn painter merely on the strength of having a pot of colors by him, unless he knows how to lay them on." As the imagination works best in solitude and stillness, it is doubtful whether the din and tumult of the present age are not unfavorable to some of the higher forms of oratory. It has been said that no man can produce poetry at will; he must wait until from a brooding, half-idle idleness, it arises, like a gentle mist from a lake, delicately and of itself. So with the fine fancies, the exquisite imagery, of the great orator; only those who are withdrawn, during long seasons, into the brooding imagination, are favored with them; and where, in this restless, hurried, and impatient age, are such to be found? Fortunately good taste does not demand that oratory should be profusely decked with flowers. Rather should it be like "the grave and gorgeous foliage of our resplendent American forest," full of richness and variety, deriving new beauty from the chill influences of a materialistic age, and admired less for its scattered hues and tints, than for the combined effect and splendor of the whole.

It is a truism to say that there can be no eloquence without deep FEELING. It is not enough for the orator to have the ordinary passions of our nature; he must be a magazine of sensibility, an electric battery, a Leyden jar charged to a plenum. No matter how rare or ample his intellectual gifts; unless he have an abnormal emotional system united with the mental,—a rare depth and fire of nature, a capability of being mightily moved so as to



move mightily, an inner power of at once awakening and controlling emotion, so that he is able *agitatus cogitare*, and, even in moments of the most fiery passion, to maintain his mastery over the inner storm of being, whose forces give fervor and impetus to his eloquence,—he can never dominate his fellow men by his oratory. He may tickle the ears of his hearers; he may charm men by fine displays of imagination, of logic, and of rhetoric; but there will be no electric appeals, no fulminating bursts of passion, no melting pathos, no sudden and overwhelming improvisations in his speeches. The thoughts and feelings of a great writer or speaker reach our hearts because they issue from his. The bullets, according to the huntsman's superstition, are sure to hit the mark, if they have first been dipped in the huntsman's blood. The cold-blooded, phlegmatic speaker, therefore, whose words issue from a frame that has no more sympathy with them than has the case of a piano with the music of which it is the medium, can have no business on the platform. The man who can't put fire into his speeches should put his speeches into the fire. When a flabby-minded young preacher, who had discoursed in old Dr. Emmons's pulpit, angling for a compliment, complained at dinner to the Doctor that "somehow he couldn't get into his subject,"—"Do you know the reason, sir?" was the caustic reply,—“it is because your subject never got into *you*.” The orator who would gain and hold the ear of the people to-day, must not only conceive his subject clearly, and hold it firmly, but his whole soul must be charged and vitalized by it; then, instead of speaking, as Strafford said, “from the teeth outward,” he will speak *from the heart and to the heart*; and, instead of shun-

ning his lips, great thoughts will come to them as Goethe said that his best thoughts came, "like singing birds, the free children of God, crying, 'Here we are!'"

"Josh Billings," in describing his experience with a boil, said that at first he knew he had a *boil*, but that after two days he knew the boil had *him*. It is not enough that the speaker have a subject, however momentous, but the subject must have *him*, if he would storm the hearts of his hearers. Lord Erskine has well said that intellect alone, however exalted, without irritable sensibility, would be only like an immense magazine of powder, if there were no such element as fire in the natural world. "It is the heart which is the spring and fountain of all eloquence." *Pectus est quod facit disertum*. Cicero tells us, in one of his letters, that in his early career the vehemence with which his intense interest in his themes led him to express himself, shattered his constitution; and he was obliged to spend two years in Greece, exercising in the gymnasium, before he could engage again in the struggles of the forum. Lord Chatham said that he did not dare to speak with a state secret lurking in his mind, for in the Sibylline frenzy of his oratory he knew not what he said. John Wesley once said to his brother Charles, who wished to draw him away from a mob, in which some coarse women were scolding each other in hot billingsgate: "Stop, Charles, and learn how to preach." "I go to hear Rowland Hill," said Sheridan, "because his ideas *come red-hot from the heart*."

The reason why so many preachers are unsuccessful is because they do not feel what they preach. The first element of pulpit power is a face-to-face knowledge of the truths to be driven home,—a vivid inward experience

pouring itself out in living, breathing, palpitating words. Whitefield, in accounting for the feebleness of the generality of preachers, attributed it to their coldness. They were not flames, but icicles. "I am persuaded," said he, "that they talk of an unknown and unfelt Christ; many congregations are dead because dead men are preaching to them." Betterton, the actor, said that the dullness and coldness that empty the meeting-house would empty the play-house, if the players spoke like the preachers; and he told the Lord Bishop of London that the reason why the clergy, speaking of things real, affect the people so little, while the players, speaking of things unreal, affect them so much, is because "the actors speak of things imaginary as though they were real; the preachers too often speak of things real as though they were imaginary." Nothing can be more true. To be eloquent, a man must be himself affected. He must be not only sincere, but deeply in earnest. The fire which he would kindle in other men's bosoms, must burn in his own heart. The magnetic force must saturate his own spirit before it will flow out upon those around him. No hypocritical expressions of feeling, however passionate in appearance, no simulated fervors, however clever the imitation, will work the magical effects of reality. The arguments which do not come from personal conviction, the words which come from no deeper source than the lips, will lack a certain indefinable but potent element which is absolutely essential to their highest effectiveness. It is not enough that a speaker utters profound or weighty truths; he must show by all possible forms of expression,—by voice, looks, and gesture, that they are truths, living, vital truths, to *him*. Even in discourses of a logical character, where the reasoning ap-

proaches almost to mathematical demonstration, the hearers will not be impressed, they will scarcely listen with patience, unless they are persuaded that the conclusions to which the speaker would force them are the deliberate, solemn convictions of his own mind.

The orator needs to remember that the communication of thought and feeling from mind to mind is not a process which depends on a proper selection of words only. Language is only one of the media through which moral convictions and impressions are conveyed from the speaker to the hearer. There is another and more spiritual conductor, a mysterious, inexplicable moral contagion, by means of which, independently of the words, the speaker's thoughts and feelings are transmitted to his auditory. This quality,—call it personal magnetism, call it a divine afflatus, call it, with Dr. Bushnell, a person's *atmosphere*, or what you will,—is the one all-potent element which, more than any other, distinguishes the true orator. It is an intangible influence, an invisible efflux of personal power which radiates from the orator's nature like heat from iron; which attracts and holds an audience as a magnet draws and holds steel-filings; and no physical gifts, no mere intellectual discipline, no intellectual culture, however exquisite or elaborate, will enable him to do without it. A speaker who lacks this quality may tickle the ear of his auditors, and even be praised for his eloquence; but he will never take the public mind by storm, or mould and shape men to his purposes. He may copy the very manner of other orators whose lips have been touched by the divine fire,—he may reproduce the very thoughts and language which on other similar occasions have thrilled men's hearts; but the words which, when spoken by the inspired orator,

stirred all souls to their depths, will be hollow, powerless, and vapid. The rod may be the rod of an enchanter, but it is not in the magician's hand, and it will not conjure. On the other hand, one who has this quality, though unlettered and rude in speech, will often, by a few simple, earnest words welling from the depths of the soul, thrill and captivate the hearts which the most labored rhetoric has left untouched.

We are told that one day a man went to Demosthenes, and in a style of speaking void of vehemence and energy, that was wholly unsuited to a strong accusation, asked him to be his advocate against a person from whom, he said, he had suffered an assault. "Not you, indeed," said the orator, in a cold, indifferent tone, "you have suffered no such thing." "What!" cried the man passionately, raising his voice, "have I not received those blows?" "Ay, now," replied Demosthenes, "you speak like a person that has been really injured." Lord Mansfield's great lack as a speaker was a want of feeling. He had every attribute of the orator but genius and heart. The intense earnestness of Charles James Fox is well known to all. When Sheridan, after passing a night in the House of Commons, was asked what his impression was, he said that he had been chiefly struck with the difference of manner between Fox and Lord Stormont. The latter began by declaring in a slow, solemn, drawling, nasal tone, that "when he considered the enormity and the unconstitutional tendency of the measures just proposed, he was hurried away in a torrent of passion and a whirlwind of impetuosity," pausing between every word and syllable; while the first, speaking with the rapidity of lightning, and with breathless anxiety and impa-

tience, said that "such was the magnitude, such the importance, such the vital interest of this question, that he could not help imploring, he could not help adjuring the house to come to it with the utmost coolness, the utmost deliberation." There is a whole treatise on oratory condensed in Sheridan's discriminating remark, which won him Fox's friendship. "I have heard," says Emerson, "an experienced counsellor say that he never feared the effect upon a jury of a lawyer who does not believe in his heart that his client ought to have a verdict. If he does not believe it, his unbelief will appear to the jury, despite of all his protestations, and will become their unbelief. This is that law whereby a work of art, of whatever kind, sets us in the same state of mind wherein the artist was when he made it. That which we do not believe, we cannot adequately say, though we may repeat the words never so often. It was this conviction which Swedenborg expressed, when he described a group of persons in the spiritual world, endeavoring in vain to articulate a proposition which they did not believe; but they could not, though they twisted and folded their lips even to indignation." It is to the honor of Daniel Webster, that if a cause which he argued was bad, he saw its infirmity so distinctly that his advocacy proved an injury rather than a help to it. But if it was good, or hung evenly poised, no sophistry of counsel, no jugglery of words, could hide its merits. He held it with a grip like that of death.

It is well known that all great actors, when they have succeeded perfectly in their art, have been themselves infected by the passion the contagion of which they wished to communicate to others. For the time they felt as if

they actually were the characters they personated. It is said that the tragic enchantress, Mrs. Siddons, from the moment she stepped into the carriage which was to take her to the theatre, till her return home, felt entirely as the person whom she was to represent, and could not, without pain, admit into her mind any other feeling. John Kemble, her brother, tells us that in one of her grand displays of tragic passion, her sweeping gait and menacing mien so spoke the goddess, that he was struck dumb,—his voice stuck in his throat. For some moments he stood paralyzed, and could not force the words from his lips. The great French tragedian, Baron, who was naturally timid, always felt as a hero for several days after he had performed any of the chief characters in Corneille's plays.

All the great productions of literature, all the great musical compositions which have entranced the souls of men, have owed their enchantment, in a great measure, to the profound feeling of which they were the expression. When Gray was asked the secret of the inspiration of "The Bard," a poem which has a rush and flow like that of Pindar's lyrics, he replied: "Why, I felt myself to be the bard." On the other hand, the reason why Young's "Night Thoughts" fails to impress the reader (especially if he knows the author's character) is the lack of genuine feeling in the poem. The deep gloom which the poet has thrown over his pictures is felt to be a trick of art rather than the terrific thunder-cloud, "the earthquake and eclipse" of nature; and the diminution of effect is proportional to what the impression would have been, had his exaggerated grief been real. When Handel was interrogated concerning his ideas and feelings when he composed

the Hallelujah chorus, he replied in his broken English: "I did think I did see all heaven before me, and the great God himself." While engaged in the composition his excitement often rose to such a pitch that he would burst into tears. A friend who called upon him as he was setting to music the pathetic words, "He was despised and rejected of men," found him sobbing. "I have heard it related," says Shield, "that when Handel's servant used to bring him chocolate, he often stood in silent astonishment to see his master's tears mixed with the ink as he penned his divine notes." We are told that the motion of his pen, rapid as it was, could not keep pace with the rapidity of his conception. The mechanical power of the hand was not sufficient for the current of ideas which flowed through that volcanic brain.

From all this it is plain that the only way to speak well in the senate, in the pulpit, or on the platform, is to banish every thought of self,—to think only of one's subject. The triumphs of true eloquence, touching, grand, sublime, awful, as they sometimes have been, are seen only when the orator stands before you in the simple majesty of truth, and, overpowered by the weight of his convictions, forgets himself and forgets everything but the truths he has to utter. You think not of who speaks, or how he speaks, but of what is spoken; transported by his pathos, your rapt imagination pictures new visions of happiness; subdued by the gushes of his tenderness, your tears mingle with his; determined by the power of his reasoning, you are prompt to admit, if not prepared to yield to, the force of his arguments; entering with your whole heart and soul into the subject of his address, you sympathize with the strong emotions which you see are in his bosom, burning



and struggling for utterance; and soon find yourself moving onward with him on the same impetuous and resistless current of feeling and passion. "It is amazing," says Goldsmith, "to what heights eloquence of this kind may reach. This is that eloquence which the ancients represented as lightning, bearing down every opposer; this is the power which has turned whole assemblies into astonishment, admiration, and awe; that is described by the torrent, the flame, and every other instance of irresistible impetuosity."\*

While deep sensibility is necessary to the orator, it must not be overpowering, so as to prevent his self-control, and lead to an undignified and theatrical exhibition of himself.

"Si vis me flere, dolendum est  
Primum ipsi tibi,"

says Horace; that is, "if you would have me weep" (or, "shed tears," or "bemoan"), you must first grieve yourself. Bautain observes that this precept is true only for those who write in the closet, and does not apply to the orator. In this we think he is mistaken, for it will be noticed that the poet applies to the emotion of the hearer a stronger word,  *flere*, than to that of the actor or speaker, thus intimating that the latter best achieves his aim by a milder exhibition of feeling than that which he would excite in the breasts of his audience. As the prophets of old were not allowed to lose all control of themselves, even in their most ecstatic moments, so the orator should preserve some self-restraint even in his grandest flights. As a rule, he should "weep with his voice, and not with his eyes"; and, however intense his emotions, restrain them sufficiently, at

\* This paragraph, and a few others in this work, have been transferred, with some changes, from "The Great Conversers, and other Essays," by the author.

least, for his ideas and sentiments to find expression. The feelings must not explode at once, but escape little by little, so as to animate the whole body of the discourse.

It is a mistake to suppose that truth to nature requires that, in the artistic reproduction of her material forms, she should be servilely copied. It is the inner life, the hidden spirit, that should be sought for in the imitation of her mysteries; and therefore the true artist, in every attempt to express them, will observe a certain reverent modesty and delicate reserve. The Attic artist understood this so well, that he made it a law of his art. Even in portraying the most violent passions, such as the despair of Niobe and the agony of Laocoön and his sons writhing in the coil of the serpents, care is taken to avoid all offensive literalness and particularity. The painter who depicted the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis, lavished all the resources of his art on the other figures of the group, but hid the countenance of Agamemnon in the folds of his robe, leaving to the imagination to conceive what art was powerless fully to convey. So the great orator of Greece was careful, even in his most impassioned bursts, not to "overstep the modesty of nature." Even in the very "torrent, tempest, and whirlwind" of his passion, he always manifested that self-mastery and reserved force, that temperance of action and utterance, which are essential to sustained power in delivery.

It is natural to suppose that it is the thunderbolt of eloquence, rather than "the still, small voice," which produces the greatest effects upon audiences; but, great as have been the recorded effects of some oratorical explosions, it may be doubted whether, after all, it is not the subdued expression of conviction and feeling, when

the speaker, instead of giving full vent to his emotions, is seen laboring with a strong effort to suppress them, that is most powerful. There are times when even silence is eloquent,—more vocal than utterance, more expressive than gesture. The conduct of Job and his three friends who sat down together seven days and seven nights, no one speaking a word to them, was more eloquent of their woe than all their subsequent complainings. There are emotions that mock at all attempts to give them expression. The Bible refers to a joy unspeakable, to groans which cannot be uttered, and to a voiceless praise. “Grief has no tongue to proclaim its keenest sorrows. Despair is speechless and torpid. Horror is dumb. The rhetorical pause is, therefore, founded in nature.” But when feeling is not too intense for utterance, the veiled expression of it is often the most effective. Who has not felt, at some time, the power of a whisper or deep low utterance, distinctly giving forth some earnest sentence? Talma, the French actor, declared that he had studied forty years to be energetic without noise. The biographer of F. W. Robertson tells us that it was because he was not mastered by his excitement, but, at the very point of being mastered, mastered *himself*,—because he was apparently cool while at a white heat, so that he made his audience glow with the fire, and at the same time respect the self-possessive power of the speaker,—that his eloquence was so conquering.

We know that in private life a speaker who, feeling deeply upon some subject, veils his emotions in part, and suffers only glimpses of them to be seen, impresses us more powerfully than one who gives loose to a pure and

unsuppressed flow of feeling. The mourner who allows only an occasional broken sob to escape him, touches our sympathies more deeply than if he were to break out into loud and passionate wailings and lamentations. It has been justly said that the crazy duelist, who was wont to break away suddenly from any pursuit he was engaged in, as if forced by some demon of passion, and, pacing off a certain distance on the floor, repeat the significant words, "one, two, three, fire! he's dead!" then wring his hands and turn abruptly to his former pursuits, gave a more touching exhibition of the agony which was preying upon his spirit, than if he had vented it in constant howlings of remorse.\* Hence Shakspeare, with that keen insight into human nature which characterizes all his portraitures, makes Antony betray but occasional signs of grief for Cæsar's death. Apologizing for any involuntary escape of sorrow, he tells the citizens that he dares not trust himself to indulge in an adequate expression of his grief:

"Bear with me;

My heart is in the coffin there with Cæsar;  
 And I must pass till it come back to me.  
 O masters! if I were disposed to stir  
 Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,  
 I should do Brutus wrong and Cassius wrong,  
 Who, you all know, are honorable men:  
 I will not do them wrong; I rather choose  
 To wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you,  
 Than I will wrong such honorable men."

When a speaker who is deeply moved, using a gentler mode of expression than the facts might warrant, appears thus to stifle his feelings and studiously to keep them within bounds, the effect of this partial concealment is to give them an appearance of greater intensity and strength.

\* See Day's "Rhetoric," 147.

In all such cases of obscure and indirect expression of emotion, the imagination is called into play; the jets of flame that escape now and then,—the suppressed bursts of feeling,—the partial eruptions of passion,—are regarded as but hints or faint intimations of the volcano within. The studied calmness of the speaker's manner and language produces a reaction in the hearer's mind, and, rushing into the opposite extreme, he is moved more deeply than by the most vehement and passionate declamation. There is also, as it has been well observed, the further advantage in this partial disguising of passion, that the determination being left to the imagination of the hearer, it can never seem to him disproportionate,—too weak or too strong.

The advantage of wit to the orator is obvious. Not only does it give a passing relief to the tension of the mind that has been plied with declamation or reasoning, and thus prepare it for renewed attention, but it is a powerful weapon of attack, and sometimes in reply a happy witicism neutralizes the force of a strong and elaborate argument. A volume of reasoning may be condensed into a keen retort, and the absurdity of an opponent's statements or logic may be exposed by an impromptu jest more effectually than by a series of syllogisms. Many a fallacy has been pricked to death by the needle of ridicule, which the club of logic has thumped in vain. Some of the greatest orators have owed much of their power and influence to this talent. Mr. Francis, the author of "Orators of the Age," goes so far as to say of T. Milner Gibson, M.P., that one witty expression of his, in which he described the Whig ministry, at a certain time, as being made of "squeezable" materials, contributed considerably toward gaining for him the position he held in the estimation

of the House of Commons. The polished irony of Canning, more than his powers of reasoning and declamation, was dreaded by his antagonists in the British Parliament. It was the sarcasm of Pitt, "at once keen and splendid, brilliant and concise," which enabled him, while yet a youth, to stand up single-handed, and effectually repel the assaults of the most powerful opposition ever arrayed against a Prime Minister. "He could dispose of an adversary," says a writer, "by a sentence or a single phrase; or, without stepping aside, get rid of him in a parenthesis, and then go forward to his object,—thus increasing the contemptuousness of the expression by its brevity and indifference, as if his victim had been too insignificant to give any trouble."

Good sense and wit, we are told, were the great weapons of Sheridan's oratory,—shrewdness in detecting the weak points of an adversary, and infinite powers of raillery in exposing them. These qualities made him a more formidable antagonist to Pitt than others who had more learning and general ability. A fair specimen of his happiness in retort was his answer to Pitt when the latter compared Sheridan's constant opposition to an eternal drag-chain, clogging all the wheels, retarding the career, and embarrassing the movements of government. Sheridan replied that a real drag-chain differed from this imaginary drag-chain of the minister, in one important essential; it was applied only when the machine was *going down the hill*. Curran's wit was so keen-edged, and his humor so rich and inexhaustible, that he is remembered for them even more than for the pathos with which he melted his countrymen, and the lava of invective which he poured out upon the authors of their wrongs. The wit and humor

of O'Connell told home upon his hearers as effectually as his power of terse, nervous, Demosthenic reasoning, his pathos, and the matchless skill with which he condensed and pointed his case.

It was the wit and humor, aided by the good nature of Lord North, the Tory minister of England, which enabled him, during the disastrous defeats of the American war, to bear up triumphantly against the ceaseless and furious attacks of Burke, Fox, Pitt, and the other Whig chiefs. By a plain, homely answer, says Lord Brougham, "he could blunt the edge of the fiercest or most refined sarcasm; with his pleasantry, never far-fetched, or overdone, or forced, he could turn away wrath, and refresh the jaded listeners; while, by his undisturbed temper, he made them believe he had the advantage, and could turn into a laugh, at the assailant's expense, the invective which had been destined to crush himself." Thus, when Alderman Sawbridge presented a petition from Billingsgate, and accompanied it with much vituperation of the minister, Lord North began his reply: "I will not deny that the worthy alderman speaks the sentiments, nay, the very language, of his constituents," etc. Again, when a vehement declaimer, calling aloud for his head, turned round and perceived his victim unconsciously indulging in a soft slumber, and, becoming still more exasperated, denounced the minister as capable of "sleeping over the ruin of his country,—asleep at a time,"—North only muttered, "I wish to Heaven I was." So when a dull, somniferous speaker manifested a similar indignation, because his speech produced its natural effect upon the minister, the latter contented himself with observing how hard it was that he should be grudged so very natural a release from considerable suffering.

Lord Erskine added the talent of wit to his other forensic gifts; and the effect of his sallies, we are told, was not merely to relieve the dryness of legal discussions, but to advance his cause. On one occasion, he was counsel for a man named Bolt, who had been assailed by the opposing counsel for dishonesty: "Gentlemen," replied Erskine, "my learned friend has taken unwarrantable liberties with my client's good name. He is so remarkably of an opposite character that he goes by the name of Bolt-upright." This was pure invention. Again, in an action against a stage-coach proprietor by a gentleman who had suffered from an upset, Erskine began: "Gentlemen of the jury, the plaintiff is Mr. Beverley, a respectable merchant of Liverpool, and the defendant is Mr. Wilson, proprietor of the Swan with Two Necks in Lad Lane,—a sign emblematic, I suppose, of the number of necks people ought to possess who travel by his vehicles." On another occasion he was employed to defend an action brought against the proprietors of a stage-coach by Polito (the keeper of a celebrated menagerie) for the loss of a trunk. "Why," asked Erskine, "did he not take a lesson from his own sagacious elephant, and travel with his trunk before him?"

All the world is familiar with the sarcasms of Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield); his hits at Peel as one who had "caught the Whigs bathing, and run away with their clothes,"—as a politician who had always "traded on the ideas of others, whose life had been one huge appropriation clause," etc. Wit is not merely the handmaid of the Premier's genius; it is the right arm of his power. Much of its point is due to his by-play,—to the subtle modulations of his voice, his peculiar shrug, and the air of icy coolness and indifference with which he utters his sneers and



sarcasms. Nothing can be more polished than his irony; it is the steeled hand in the silken glove. Yet, on account of its personality and vindictiveness, it cannot be commended for imitation. As it has been well said, the adder lurks under the rose-leaves of his rhetoric; the golden arrows are tipped with poison.

A good example of the effect of a witticism in neutralizing the force of an eloquent appeal, was furnished by George Wood, of the New York bar, in the great Old School and New School case, tried some years ago at Philadelphia, involving the possession of Princeton Seminary. The eloquent William C. Preston, of South Carolina, addressed the court and jury for three days, in a speech of great rhetorical beauty, in behalf of the New School. "May it please the court, and gentlemen of the jury," said Mr. Wood in reply, "if you propose to follow me, you will come down from the clouds where you have been for the last three days, and walk on the earth." The effect upon Mr. Preston's pyrotechnics was like a sudden shower upon Fourth of July fire-works.

It has been said that no speaker can have much influence who merely amuses his hearers,—that even in politics, the most effective orators are not those who make the people laugh. All this is true enough; but if audiences do not need to be amused, they need to be kept awake and alive; and for this nothing is more effectual than an occasional sally of wit. It is said, again, that wit is dangerous, which is also true; and so is everything that is energetic. The cultivation of science is dangerous; the practice of charity is dangerous; eloquence is particularly dangerous; a dunce is almost as dangerous as a genius; nothing is absolutely harmless but mediocrity. It is easy

to abstain from excess in the use of faculties which Nature has doled out to us with miserly frugality. But that wit may give an added charm and zest to eloquence, without needlessly wounding men's feelings, encouraging levity in its possessor, or mocking at things which should be held in reverence, is proved by a long line of examples, beginning long before him of whom it was said, that

"His wit in the combat, as gentle as bright,  
Never carried a heart-stain away on its blade,"

and reaching down to some of the most brilliant speakers of the present half century.

Some of the ancient rhetoricians were accustomed to insist on VIRTUE as an essential qualification of the orator, on the ground that a good character, which can be established in no better way than by deserving it, has great weight with an audience. This is evidently incorrect; for, though it is true that a reputation for uprightness adds to a speaker's influence, yet it no more belongs to the orator as such, than wealth, rank, or a fine person, all of which have manifestly the same effect. But, though not an indispensable requisite of the orator, there is no doubt that a reputation for integrity gives to his words a weight and potency which he cannot afford to despise. M. Droz, in his *Essai sur l'Art Oratoire*, justly affirms that there is no people sunk so low in immorality as to make the reputation of him who addresses them wholly indifferent to them. There is no deeper law in human nature than that which compels men to withhold their respect and confidence from one who violates or disregards the primary principles of morality. Dr. Franklin was so strongly convinced of this that he regarded a reputation for honesty as more important to a speaker than even the "action" which Demos-

thenes so earnestly emphasized. In his Diary, under date of July 27, 1784, he states that Lord Fitzmaurice having come to him for advice, he "mentioned the old story of Demosthenes' answer to one who demanded what was the first point of oratory. *Action.* The second? *Action.* The third? *Action.* Which, I said, had been generally understood to mean the action of an orator with his hands, etc., in speaking; but that I thought another kind of action of more importance to an orator, who would persuade people to follow his advice, viz., such a course of action in the conduct of life as would impress them with an opinion of his integrity as well as of his understanding; that, this opinion once established, all the difficulties, delays, and oppositions, usually caused by doubts and suspicions, were prevented; and such a man, though a very imperfect speaker, would almost carry his points against the most flourishing orator who had not the character of sincerity."

The reason, doubtless, which suggested this advice in the present instance, was the character of Lord Fitzmaurice's father, Lord Shelburne, who, though a man of high talent, was regarded as insincere. There is no doubt that in the long and bitter struggle in the British Parliament between Pitt and Fox, it was the superior integrity of the former that gave him, in spite of the icy hardness of his character, the victory over his antagonist. It was the influence which his blameless purity of life gave to his words, that made them so potent with the people, and enabled him to treat the taunts and reproaches of his enemy with haughty silence, and that superb contempt which was so marked a trait of his character. Fox possessed many amiable social qualities, warm affections, a placable and forgiving disposition, and a sweet and winning temper,

which nothing could sour. But, though he was immensely popular with his associates, his countrymen generally had no confidence in him; and the effect of his burning and electrical appeals was to a great extent neutralized, because they looked upon him as a reckless *debauché*, who spent his days in drinking and gambling with the Prince of Wales. Even those who admired everything in his talents and much in his qualities, we are told, regretted that his name never ceased to excite in their minds the idea of gamblers and bacchanals, even after he was acknowledged to have abandoned their society. Those who held his opinions were almost sorry that he should have championed them, when they saw with what malicious exultation those who rejected them could recite his profligate life, in place of an argument, to invalidate their force. It was in vain that he gave his days to the serfs in Africa and to the helots in America, while he gave his nights to champagne and ombre. When in 1782 he was confidently expecting to be made prime minister, Dr. Price, who went beyond him in his devotion to liberal principles, protested against his appointment in a Fast Sermon, which was circulated throughout the kingdom. "Can you imagine," he asked, "that a spendthrift in his own concerns will make an economist in managing the concerns of others?—that a wild gambler will take due care of the state of a kingdom?"

It is often said that the weight and pertinency of a man's arguments have no necessary connection with his morals; that the most illogical reasonings may come from the lips of a man of invulnerable reputation, and the most triumphant proofs of a proposition be adduced by one who is profligate in morals. But daily experience

shows that the world reasons differently; and nothing is more certain than that one glaring vice in a public speaker will sometimes preclude all confidence in his reasonings, and render futile the strongest efforts of his talents. "What care I what you say," exclaims Emerson, "when what you do stands over my head, and thunders in my ear so loud that I cannot hear what you say?"

It was said of Sheridan that, had he but possessed trustworthiness of character, he might have ruled the world; whereas, living only to dazzle and amuse, he had no weight or influence either in politics or life. On the other hand, Washington, who had no oratorical gifts, had such weight in the Congress that formed the Constitution, that when he delivered his opinion in a few pithy sentences, the mere declaimers sank into insignificance. Baxter, in a passage quoted by Phillips Brooks tells us that in the English civil wars "an abundance of the ignorant sort of the common people which were civil did flock into the Parliament, and filled up their armies, merely because they heard men *swear* for the Common Prayer and bishops, and heard men *pray* that were against them. And all the sober men that I was acquainted with who were against the Parliament, were wont to say, 'The King hath the better cause, but the Parliament the better men.'" "I suppose," adds Mr. Brooks, "that no cause could be so good that, sustained by bad men, and opposed to any error whose champions were men of spotless lives, it would not fall." Had Luther's words been contradicted by his life, they never would have rung through Germany like a trumpet, and become, as Richter said of them, "half battles."\*

\* See, on this subject, "Words; their Use and Abuse," by the author.

In thus enumerating the qualifications of the orator, we would not be understood as implying that the essential secret of his art can be learned from any such description. It is in vain to attempt to explain his magnetism, the mighty effects which he works; by a *catalogue raisonnée* of his qualities. Eloquence, like a genius for invention, for music or painting, is primarily a gift of God, and we shall never be able to grasp or describe it by seizing upon its forms. Like that of beauty, music, or a delicious odor, its charm is subtle and impalpable, and baffles all our efforts to explain it in words. There are persons whose looks and manner charm us at first sight; we are drawn to them by an irresistible fascination; there is a spell upon us the moment we see them; as was said by Saint-Simon of Fenelon, it requires an effort to cease to look at them. But in vain would we try to analyze the causes of our impressions; we only know that there are certain faces with "a witching smile and pawky een," that find us all more or less vulnerable, though their shafts are shot, so to speak, from an ambush. Who can explain the hidden life of the rose? The botanist can take the flower to pieces, and show you the stamens, calyx, and corolla; but he cannot put his finger on the mysterious thing which holds them together, and makes the living flower. The life escapes his grasp.\* Who, again, can explain the

\* Beauty, says Goethe, "is inexplicable; it appears to us as a dream, when we contemplate the works of great artists; it is a hovering, floating, and glittering shadow, whose outline eludes the grasp of definition. Mendelssohn and others tried to catch beauty as a butterfly, and pin it down for inspection. They have succeeded in the same way as they are likely to succeed with the butterfly. The poor animal trembles and struggles, and its brightest colors are gone; or, if you catch it without spilling the colors, you have at best a stiff and awkward corpse. But a corpse is not an *entire* animal; it wants that which is essential in all things, namely, life,—spirit, which sheds beauty on everything."

mystery of the musician's art? Why is it that the simplest strains sometimes so thrill and melt the heart? How is it that an old song, which we have heard a thousand times before, can, in certain moods, so joyfully or sadly touch our souls. We cannot "pluck out the heart" of this mystery. We simply know that there is a divine power, an inexplicable sorcery, lodged in this art of arts; that by its magical airs and melodies it can open the floodgates of the soul, and wet the eye with unbidden tears, or fill the heart with gladness, till joy, like madness, pours out its sparkles from the clear depths of the eyes.

So with eloquence. Its subtle spell is alike inexplicable. To suppose that it is a trick of language, or look, or gesture, which one man can learn from another, is an illusion. It acts by virtue of some hidden principle, some electric or magnetic quality, which is seen in its *effects*, but which utterly eludes analysis. It is not an effect, necessarily, of scholarship and polished periods. It does not depend upon brilliant rhetoric, a vivid imagination, or upon winning looks, or a commanding *physique*. Nor does it consist of "something greater and higher than all these,—action, noble, sublime, godlike action." Who that has ever listened to a mighty orator has not felt how inadequate were all attempts to describe him? In vain does one expatiate on the beauty or nobleness of his person, his regal carriage, his speaking eye, his clarion-like voice, the admirable arrangement of his arguments, his wit, his pathos, the fluency and magnificence of his language, his exquisite observance of the temper of his audience. All these qualifications he may possess, and we may be sure that all these cannot co-exist without constituting a great orator; but when we

have said all, we feel that there is something more,—something indefinable, and more vital than all the rest,—which we have left untold. It is, in short, an inventory, rather than a description; “the play of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out.” We have failed as inevitably and signally as if we should attempt to portray the matchless beauty of the Belvidere Apollo by an enumeration of its visible qualities. We might extol its exquisite proportions, expressing strength and swiftness, the anatomical truth of its attitude, the life-like beauty of its features, and the inimitable delicacy and fineness of its workmanship; and the catalogue of its excellences, so far as it went, would be faultless; but who that had ever seen the divine original would say that we had conveyed even a proximately distinct impression of the bounding grace, the matchless symmetry, and above all, the air of celestial dignity, which electrifies every spectator of “the statue that enchants the world,”—a statue whose constituent qualities can no more be described than they can be misunderstood by any beholder with eyes and intelligence?

Nor can even the orator himself explain the secret of his art. In the work of all the great masters there are certain elements that are a mystery to themselves. In the fire of creation they instinctively infuse into their productions certain qualities of which they would be utterly puzzled to give an account. It is so in music, in sculpture, in painting, and even in the military art. When Napoleon was asked by a flatterer of his generalship, how he won his victories, he replied: “*Mon Dieu! c'est ma nature; je suis fait comme ça* (Bless me! it is natural to me; I was made so)”. Genius, says a French writer, has its unconscious acts, like beauty, like infancy. When an infant charms

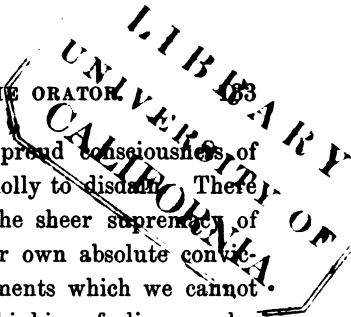


you, by its artless smile, it does not know that its smile is artless. The effect which the orator achieves is due not merely to his separate gifts, but to their mystic and inexplicable union, and to a certain magic art that works like an instinct,—an art by which, like the painter in his moments of ecstasy, the poet in his moments of frenzy, he flings over his work a light “that never was by sea or land,” and “leavens it all with the mystical spirit of beauty, and pathos, and power,—like the indefinable light which hovers in the eyes of the Madonna of Raphael, like the immeasurable power which seems to threaten in the frescoes of Angelo.”

The difficulty of discovering the secret of eloquence will appear still farther, if we consider the almost infinite varieties of oratorical excellence, the innumerable ways in which the enthusiasm of crowds is kindled. The eloquence of some speakers, from its first small beginning to the broad, grand peroration, reminds you of a calm and beautiful river, that winds its course unruffled by the wind,—now pausing on its pebbly bed, now shooting arrow-like along, now widening and swelling into deep, lake-like pools, now contracting its deep channel in some narrow gorge, till at last it pours its full volume into the sea. The eloquence of another is like a mountain torrent, which, sweeping all obstacles before it, rolls on with an impetuous, ever swelling flood, and a loud and increasing roar, filling the valleys with its thunders, and overflowing its embankments far and wide, till it spends its fury on the plain or in some vast lake. One speaker appeals to the reason rather than to the passions, and seeks to convince rather than to persuade; another abounds in startling apostrophes and soul-stirring

appeals, which the former, in the proud consciousness of his argumentative power, seems wholly to disdain. There are profound reasoners, who, by the sheer supremacy of intellect, by force of will and their own absolute conviction, implant within us vital sentiments which we cannot dislodge, and which send us away thinking, feeling, resolving; and, again, there are itinerant preachers, spiritual tinkers, and reformed inebriates, who, by the mere force of personal enthusiasm, of vehement physical passion, raise us to dizzy heights of excitement and draw tears from eyes unused to weep. There are speakers who cultivate all the seductive arts of address, and who try to propitiate their hearers by studied exordiums; there are others who accomplish equally great, or even greater, results, by standing bolt-upright, disdaining all action, making a rush at once at the very pith and marrow of the question, and firing off their sentences in short, quick volleys, like those of a steam-gun.

The great orator of Greece spent so many weeks and months upon his speeches that his enemies said they smelt of the lamp; Webster prepared his immortal reply to Hayne in a single night. Lord Chatham, to perfect his use of language, read Bailey's dictionary twice over, and articulated before a glass; Patrick Henry affected a greater slovenliness of style and rusticity of pronunciation than was natural to him, and declared that "*naiteral* parts is better than all the *larning* upon *yearth*." The former, an inveterate actor, and fastidious in his toilette, carefully adjusted his dress before speaking; the other slouched into the legislature with his greasy leather-breeches and shooting-jacket. Henry Clay, with the most commonplace thoughts, often charmed his hearers by the



musical tones of his voice; Brougham electrified his audience by notes as harsh and hoarse as the scream of the eagle. Sheil produced his effects by rapid, electric sentences, like bolts from a thunder-cloud; still greater effects were produced by the "drawling, but fiery" sentences of Grattan. William Pitt, with a stiff figure and a solemn posture, like that of a passionless automaton, swayed the House of Commons with stately, flowing, sonorous sentences, in which "a couple of powdered lacqueys of adjectives waited on every substantive"; Fox, until he got warmed with his subject, hesitated and stammered,—often kept on for a long time in a tame and commonplace strain,—but gaining impetus and inspiration as he proceeded, swept the house, at last, with a hurricane of eloquence. Hamilton declared that the oratory of the former appeared to him "languid eloquence"; that of the latter, "spirited vulgarity." The greatest bursts of oratory have generally been improvised, and their effects enhanced by apt and significant gesture; but Dr. Chalmers, one of the most powerful of pulpit orators, spoke from manuscript, and hardly moved a finger. Mirabeau, the most stormy, electric, and resistless of French orators, pursued a middle course; he took the brief of an oration, as he mounted the tribune, from the hand of a friend; and many of his best passages, short, rapid, and electrical, flashed out from between the trains of arguments laboriously prepared for him, like lightning through the clouds. Such, doubtless, was the case with his comparison of the Gracchi, his celebrated allusion to the Tarpeian Rock, and his apostrophe to Sieyes. Burke, before the spectre of the French Revolution shot across his path, was listened to as a seer by the House of Com-

mons; but, after that event, his Cassandra-like croakings bored his hearers, and his rising to speak was a signal for a stampede from the benches.

Some years ago "The Editor's Chair" of "Harper's Magazine" called attention to the contrast between the oratory of Edward Everett and that of John B. Gough. Perhaps no speaker in America has been listened to with more delight by thousands and tens of thousands that have crowded to hear him than Gough. Year after year he repeats the same discourses, with slight changes, from the same platforms; and year after year men laugh at the same "gape-seed" stories, weep at the same tales of pathos, and are thrilled by the same vivid appeals to their sensibilities. Yet Gough has neither literary genius nor culture, neither personal magnetism nor a musical voice,—indeed, hardly any of the gifts which are deemed essential to the popular orator. He has justly been called "an oratorical actor,—a kind of Fox-Garrick." On the other hand, Edward Everett, who forty years ago was the prince of rhetoricians, if not the prince of orators in this country,—to whose rhythmical and polished periods the scholarly audiences of New England listened with never-ending delight,—was a man of Attic taste and refinement, the highest product of New England culture. Cold, passionless, undramatic, trusting to old, traditional, time-honored forms in action and delivery, having no deep convictions, and consequently abstaining altogether from what Aristotle calls the agonistical or "wrestling" style of oratory, he delivered his carefully elaborated periods in tones modulated with equal care, and with such a uniform perfection of manner that the whole seemed like the effect of mechanism. Yet he, too, drew admiring crowds, al-

though a more marked contrast to Gough could hardly be named.\*

One of the greatest of modern orators, Lord Brougham, lays down as a test of a great mind in the senate, the power of making a vigorous reply to a powerful attack. The observation appears a just one, for as "iron sharpeneth iron," the clash of intellect, like the collision of flint and steel, throws out a sparkling stream. Among the distinguished orators of the United States, there have been many striking examples of this power, the most notable, perhaps, being Webster's reply to Hayne. Naturally, Mr. Webster was of a heavy, sluggish temperament, and required to be assaulted by a formidable antagonist,—to be lashed, and goaded, and driven to the wall, by another giant like himself,—to set his massive energies in motion. For the ordinary parliamentary duello,—that species of intellectual gladiatorship which requires that a man should have a little of the savage in him, to be very successful in it,—he had little taste. But give him a great occasion, and an adversary worth grappling with,—a foeman worthy of his steel,—and he rises with the exigences of the occasion, and displays the giant strength of his intellect, the fiery vehemence of his sensibility, his brilliant imagination, and his resistless might of will, to terrible advantage. When thus roused and stimulated, his pent-up stores of passion burst forth with volcanic force; he presses into his service all the weapons of oratory; the toughest sophistries of his adversaries are rent asunder like cobwebs; denunciation and sarcasm are met with sarcasm and denunciation still more crushing and incurably wounding;

\* Not having the volume of "Harper" before us, we give the comparison as nearly as we can recollect it, with, of course, some changes in the language.

and his style has, at times, a Miltonic grandeur and roll which are rarely surpassed for majestic eloquence.

Among the orators of Great Britain Lord Brougham himself was one of the most remarkable illustrations of his own remark. When his faculties were stimulated by assault, no man rose more readily with the greatness of the occasion, or poured out a more fearful torrent of scathing invective, with all the peculiarities of look, tone, and gesture, which drive a pointed observation home. His enunciation was naturally harsh, yet it was so modulated, we are told, that the hearer was carried through a series of involved sentences without perplexity, until, at the close, the orator literally pierced the intellect by the concluding phrase, which was the keynote to the whole. In days gone by, Brougham and Canning "used to watch each other across the table, eagerly waiting for the advantage of reply; the graceful and accomplished orator being aware that his rival, by a single intonation, or even a pointing of a finger, could overwhelm with ridicule the substance of a well-prepared speech." One of the most effective British speakers in reply at a later day, was Sir Robert Peel. His tenacious memory preserved every point of his adversary's argument, and his practical intellect enabled him to hit an objection "between wind and water." Lord Macaulay, on the other hand, though he always chained the attention of the house by his set efforts, could not speak in reply.

That climate and race have not a little to do with eloquence, is an obvious fact. The style called Asiatic, for example, is marked, like all oriental compositions, by an excess of imagination; the wings are disproportioned to the body. Cicero, in speaking of it, says: "No sooner

had eloquence ventured to sail from the Piræus, than she traversed all the isles and visited every part of Asia, till at last, infected with their manners, she lost all the purity and healthy complexion of the Attic style, and, indeed, almost forgot her native language." It is a curious fact noted by a late writer, that the climatic conditions of extreme heat and cold have a similar effect on the imaginative faculty, causing it to overshadow all the others, as may be seen in the poetry of Arabia and Hindostan and the Edda of Scandinavia. The Irish and the French are born orators; and our own Southern people have a great advantage over the New-Englanders, who, as Emerson says, live in a climate so cold that they scarcely dare to open their mouths wide. Yet the rule has many exceptions, and Nature is perpetually startling us with her freaks and anomalies. Who that ever listened to Rufus Choate, so oriental both in his looks and style of speech, would have fancied, before being told, that he was a product of the same rocky soil as Jeremiah Mason and Daniel Webster? Or who would have dreamed of finding in a child of Maine a genius as fiery and fervid, an imagination as tropical in its fruitfulness and splendor, as any that blooms in oriental climes? Yet such were the qualities of Sargent S. Prentiss, whom, reasoning *a priori*, one would have expected to possess an understanding as solid as the granite of her hills, and a temperament as cold as her climate. So, it has been happily said, "the flora of the South is more gorgeous and variegated than that of less favored climes; but occasionally there springs up in the cold North a flower of as delicate a perfume as any within the tropics. The heavens in the equatorial regions are bright with golden radiance, and the meteors

shoot with greater effulgence through the air; but even the snow-clad hills of the North flash, from time to time, with the glories of the Aurora Borealis. Under the line are found more numerous volcanoes, constantly throwing up their ashes and their flames; but none of them excel in grandeur the Northern Hecla, from whose deep caverns rolls the melted lava down its ice-bound sides."

If the gifts of the impassioned son of Maine belied his birth-place, not less, in an opposite manner, did those of Carolina's child, John C. Calhoun. Born in a tropical region, where a southern sun is apt to ripen human passion into the rank luxuriance of tropical vegetation, he was as severely logical, as rigidly intellectual, as if he had been reared in Nova Zembla, or any other region above the line of perpetual snow. Dwelling amid the luxuriant life, the magnificence and pomp, the deep-toned harmonies, of the Southern zones, he was as blind to their beauties, as deaf to their melodies, as if he had really been "the cast-iron man" that he was called, and had sprung from the bowels of a granite New Hampshire mountain.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE ORATOR'S TRIALS.

**I**F the orator has his triumphs, which are as dazzling as any that are the reward of genius and toil, he has also, by that inexorable law of compensation which so largely equalizes human conditions, trials which are proportional to his successes. The hearer who "hangs both his greedy ears upon his lips," little dreams of the toils and mortifications the speaker has undergone. The aspirants to oratorical distinction, who envy him his fame and influence, have but a faint conception of the laborious days and sleepless nights which his successes have cost him,—of the distracting cares and interruptions, the nervous fears of failure, or of falling below himself and below public expectation, the treacheries of memory, the exhaustion and collapse of feeling, the self-dissatisfaction and self-disgust, with which the practice of his art has been attended. Armies are not always cheering on the heights which they have won. "The statue does not come to its white limbs at once. It is the bronze wrestler, not the flesh and blood one, that stands for ever over a fallen adversary with the pride of victory on his face." It is a rare intellectual gratification to listen to a finished orator; and so it is delightful to gaze upon tapestry, and we are dazzled by the splendor of the colors, and the cunning intertexture of its purple and gold; but how many of those who

are captivated by its beauty turn the arras to see the jagged ends of thread, the shreds and rags of worsted, and the unsightly patchwork, of the reverse side of the picture, or dream of the toil it represents? Yet it is on this side that the artificer sits and works; it is at this picture that he gazes, until oftentimes the splendor he has wrought becomes distasteful, and he would fain abandon his calling for one that exacts less toil, even though it wins less admiration from the spectator.

There is hardly any public speaker of great celebrity who will not confess that he feels more or less tremor when he rises to speak, on a great occasion,—though it be for the hundredth time. To stand up before a crowded and perhaps imposing assembly, without a scrap of paper, without a chair, perhaps, to lean upon, and trusting to the fertility and readiness of your brain, to attempt a speech amid the profoundest silence, while you are the focus of a thousand eyes, and feel, as they scan or scrutinize you, that you are under the necessity of winning and holding the attention of all those listeners for an hour, or hours,—is a trying task, and demands hardly less nerve and self-possession than any other critical situation in life. Those who have often assumed such a task, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, will confess that there are occasions when it is indescribably painful, and that they have no remission from either physical or mental suffering until it is performed.

But what is the cause of this anxiety and misery? Why should it be so much more difficult to address a hundred men than to address one? Why should a man who never hesitates or stammers in pouring out his thoughts to a friend or a circle of friends, be embarrassed or struck

dumb if he attempts to say the same things, however suitable, to fifty persons? Why is it that though he is awed by the presence of no one of them, and even feels himself to be intellectually superior to every individual he faces, yet collectively they inspire him with awe, if not with terror? How comes it that though he has a steady flow of ideas and words when he sits in a chair, he cannot think on his legs; that even a half-reclining posture does not check improvisation, but perpendicularity paralyzes him? Whatever may be the explanation of the phenomenon, we are all familiar with it. If we have not had personal experience of that Belshazzarish knocking of the knees, and that cleaving of the tongue to the roof of the mouth, which sometimes afflicts the public speaker in the most unexpected and mysterious manner, we have had occasion, probably, to witness painful instances of it in the experiences of others. There is hardly a more distressing position in which a human being can be placed, than that of the newly-fledged orator, who looks upon "a sea of upturned faces" for the first time, and, in a fright, forgets what he had to say. He may have repeated his speech forty times in his study, in the woods to the trees, or in his garden to the cabbages, without hesitating or omitting a word; yet the moment he mounts the rostrum and faces an audience, his intense consciousness of the human presence, of its reality, and of the impossibility of escaping it, petrifies the mind, paralyzes all his powers.

Even the most distinguished orators tell us that their first attempts at public speaking were fiery ordeals; and not a few broke down opprobriously, "throttling their practiced accents in their fears," and losing the thread of their thoughts in an access of helpless consternation.

The brightest wits have been disgraced in this way as well as the dullest. The likelihood of such a result is, indeed, just in proportion to the speaker's oratorical gifts. Men of the finest genius and the most thorough accomplishment in other respects, often fail as public speakers from sheer excess of ideas, while a mere parrot of a fellow, with little culture and but a thimbleful of brains, "goes off" in a steady stream of words, like a rain-spout in a thunder-storm. As a crowded hall is vacated more slowly and with more difficulty than one with a small assembly, so the very multitude of the thoughts that press to the lips may impede their escape. It is well known, too, that the very delicacy of perception, the exquisite sensibility to impressions, and the impulsiveness, which are the soul of all eloquence, are almost necessarily accompanied by a certain degree of nervous tremulousness, just as a finely-strung harp vibrates at the slightest touch, or whenever the faintest breeze passes over it.

A certain amount of sensibility is, of course, absolutely indispensable to the orator, and it is, therefore, a good sign when he feels some anxiety before rising to address an assembly. The most valiant troops feel always more or less nervous at the first cannon-shot; and it is said that one of the most famous generals of the French Empire, who was called "the bravest of the brave," was always obliged to dismount from his horse at that solemn moment; after which he rushed like a lion into the fray. But while the orator must feel deeply what he has to say, his feeling must not reach that vehemence which prevents the mind from acting,—which paralyzes the expression from the very fullness of the feeling. As a mill-wheel may fail to move from an excess of water as truly as

from a lack of it, so there may be a sort of intellectual apoplexy, which obstructs speech, and renders it powerless by the very excess of life. It was, doubtless, for this reason that Rousseau could never speak in public, and that the Abbé Lamennais, who wrote with a pen of fire, never ventured to ascend the pulpit, or even to address a meeting of children.

Kennedy, in his *Life of William Wirt*, speaks with deep sympathy of the agony of a confused novice, whom he saw arise a second time to address a jury, after having stuck fast in his first attempt at utterance. The second essay proving equally unfortunate, he stood silent for a few moments, and then was able to say,—“Gentlemen, I declare to Heaven, that if I had an enemy upon whose head I would invoke the most cruel torture, I could wish him no other fate than to stand where I stand now.” Luckily,—and the fact is full of encouragement to other sufferers,—the very sympathy which this appeal won for him, seemed almost instantly to give him strength. A short pause was followed by another effort, which was crowned with complete, and even triumphant, success. It is well known that Erskine, the great forensic advocate, was at first painfully unready of speech. So embarrassed was he in one of his maiden efforts that he would have abandoned the attempt to harangue juries, had he not felt, as he tells us, his children tugging at his gown, and urging him on, in spite of his boggling and stammering. Sheridan and Disraeli, as all the world knows, “hung fire” in their first speeches, and Curran was almost knocked down by the sound of his own voice when he first addressed his “gentlemen” in a little room of a tavern. The first speech of Cobden, also, who became afterward one of the

most powerful champions of the Anti-Corn-Law League, was a humiliating failure.

It is said that Canning was sure of speaking his best if he rose in a great fright. To feel his heart beating rapidly, to wish the floor would open and swallow him, were signs of an oratorical triumph. At a Mayor's dinner in Liverpool, he was so nervous before he was called on to speak, that he twice left the room in order to collect his thoughts. He has given a graphic narrative of his feelings on making his maiden speech in 1793, when he entered the House of Commons. It is full of encouragement to those who are trembling in view of the same fiery ordeal: "I intended to have told you, at full length, what were my feelings at getting up, and being pointed at by the Speaker, and hearing my name called from all sides of the House; how I trembled lest I should hesitate or misplace a word in the two or three first sentences; while all was dead silence around me, and my own voice sounded to my ears quite like some other gentleman's; how, in about ten minutes or less, I got warmed in collision with Fox's arguments, and did not even care twopence for anybody or anything; how I was roused, in about half an hour, from this pleasing state of self-sufficiency, by accidentally casting my eyes toward the Opposition bench, for the purpose of paying compliments to Fox, and assuring him of my respect and admiration, and there seeing certain members of Opposition laughing (as I thought) and quizzing me; how this accident abashed me, and, together with my being out of breath, rendered me incapable of utterance; how those who sat below me on the Treasury bench, seeing what it was that distressed me, cheered loudly, and the House joined them and how in less than a minute, straining every

nerve in my body, and plucking up every bit of resolution in my heart, I went on more boldly than ever, and getting into a part of my subject that I liked, and, having the House with me, got happily and triumphantly to the end."

Dr. Storrs, of New York, one of the most accomplished extemporaneous preachers in America, states that when he delivered his first sermon after his installation in Brooklyn, he made almost a dead failure. He staggered along and floundered for twenty-five minutes, and then stopped. "I sank back on the chair, almost wishing that I had been with Pharaoh and his hosts when the Red Sea went over them!" It is said that a New Hampshire legislator, from one of the rural districts, having stuck fast in his maiden speech, abruptly concluded as follows: "Mr. Speaker; It is pretty generally considered, I believe, to be pretty impossible for a man to communicate those ideas *whereof he is not possessed of*,"—a proposition which Demosthenes himself would not dispute. "My lords," said the Earl of Rochester on a certain occasion, "I—I—I rise this time,—my lords, I—I—I divide my discourse into four *branches*." Here he came to a halt, and then added: "My lords, if ever I rise again in this house, I give you leave to cut me off, *root and branch*, forever." When Tristram Burgess, of Rhode Island, was making a speech in Congress, he directed his eagle eye, and pointed his forefinger, toward his opponent on the floor, and, in this threatening attitude, made a long and emphatic pause. "That pause was terrible," said a fellow-representative to Mr. Burgess after the debate was over. "To no one so terrible as to me," responded the orator, "for I couldn't think of anything to say."

That a public speaker in the beginning of his career should feel more or less of perturbation on rising to ad-

dress a public assembly, is, as we have said, no marvel; the only marvel is that such embarrassments are not more frequent and more disastrous. When we consider how little is required to disconcert, and even to paralyze him,—a fly on his nose,—a headache or heartache,—the distractions which may assail him, and divert his attention, such as an appearance of slight in his audience, a cough, a yawn, a rude laugh, or even a whisper,—a sudden failure of memory, so that part of his plan, perhaps even its main division, may be suddenly lost,—the dullness of his imagination, which may picture feebly and confusedly the things it presents,—the escape of an unlucky expression,—a sudden idea, an oratorical inspiration, which carries him far away from his theme,—a sentence badly begun, into which he has “jumped with both feet together, without knowing the way out,”—the inability, while finishing the development of one period, to throw forward the view to the next thought, the link to connect it with that which is to follow,—when we think, too, that any or all of these embarrassments may occur to him while all eyes are concentrated upon him, watching his every look and gesture,—it seems wonderful that any man,—above all, that a man with so extreme a sensibility as the orator must have,—should dare to face an assembly.

Even years of practice in public speaking do not always extinguish the timidity which is felt in confronting an assemblage of listeners. Cicero, notwithstanding his long experience in oratory, does not hesitate to make this confession: “I declare that when I think of the moment when I shall have to rise and speak in defense of a client, I am not only disturbed in mind, but tremble in every limb of my body.” We are told by some of the ancient



writers that he began his speeches in a low, quivering voice, just like a school-boy afraid of not saying his lesson perfectly enough to escape whipping. According to Plutarch, he scarcely left off trembling and quivering even when he had got thoroughly into the current and substance of his speech. This may have been owing to a naturally weak, nervous constitution, to which also we may ascribe the timidity of character which, although on a memorable occasion, he could thunder forth, *Contempsi Catalinæ gladios, non pertimescam tuos*, yet caused him, in the strife of contending factions, painfully to oscillate between his regards for Pompey and his fear of Cæsar. An English reviewer tells of an eminent law-lord, the very model of senatorial and judicial eloquence of the composed and dignified order, who has been seen to tremble, when he rose to address the House of Lords, like a thorough-bred racer when first brought to the starting-post. Even the great reviewer, Jeffrey, once stuck in a speech. Being chosen by the admirers of John Kemble to present him with a snuff-box at a public dinner, Jeffrey, a small man, found himself so overwhelmed and sunk to the earth by the obeisances of the tall tragic god, that he got confused, stopped, and sat down, without even thrusting the box into the actor's hands.

Patrick Henry often hesitated at first, and had the air of laboring under a distressing degree of modesty or timidity, which continued to characterize his manner throughout, unless he was led to throw it off by some great excitement. Dr. Chalmers, though a giant in the pulpit, never was able to speak extempore in a way satisfactorily to himself, though the cause was not bashfulness, but the overmastering fluency of his mind. Thoughts and words

came to his lips in a flood, and thus impeded each other, like water which one attempts to pour all at once out of a narrow-mouthed jug. Lord Macaulay, in a letter to his sister, says of himself: "Nothing but strong excitement and a great occasion overcomes a certain reserve and *mauvaise honte* which I have in public speaking; not a *mauvaise honte* which in the least confuses me or makes me hesitate for a word, but which keeps me from putting any fervor into my tone or my action." If ever a man spoke as if he never knew fear or modesty, it was the late Earl of Derby. Yet he said to Macaulay that he never rose without the greatest uneasiness. "My throat and lips," he said, "when I am going to speak, are as dry as those of a man who is going to be hanged." Tiernay, who was one of the most ready and fluent debaters ever known, made a confession similar to Stanley's. He never spoke, he said, without feeling his knees knock together when he rose. A junior counsel once congratulated Sir William Follett on his perfect composure in prospect of a great case. Sir William asked his friend merely to feel his hand, which was wet with anxiety. A famous parliamentary orator said that his speeches cost him two sleepless nights,—one in which he was thinking what to say, the other in which he was lamenting what he might have said better. Mirabeau, with all his fire, dragged a little (*était un peu trainant*) at the beginning of his speeches, and was sometimes incoherent; but, gaining momentum as he proceeded, he swept onward at last with resistless power. Like a huge ship which in a dead calm rolls and tosses on the heavy swell, but, as the wind fills its sails, dashes proudly onward, so the great orator rocked on the sea of thought, till, caught by the breath

of passion, he moved onward with majestic might and motion.

William Pinkney was one of the haughtiest, most self-confident, and most vehement of orators; yet, in one of his very latest efforts at the bar, when the occasion had drawn public expectation toward him, his lips were seen to part with their color, his cheeks to turn pale, and his knees to shake. He often said that he never addressed an audience without some painful and embarrassing emotions at the beginning. As he advanced with his speech, these boyish tremors disappeared, and he became bold, erect, and dictatorial. Gough is said to be still troubled with the stage-fright which he can mimic so well in his lecture upon "Oratory," though he has faced audiences for more than thirty years. Rufus Choate would often, before beginning a jury address, look as restless, nervous, and wretched as a man on the scaffold, momentarily expecting the drop to fall under him. Many speakers who have no fears of a familiar audience, are yet nervous in a new position. We have seen the Governor of a great State, who was perfectly at home on the stump, quake like a school-boy when standing up before a body of college students whom he had reluctantly consented to address. Lord Eldon once said that he was always a little nervous in speaking at the Goldsmiths' dinner, though he could talk before Parliament with as much indifference as if it were so many cabbage-plants.

Not only courage, but presence of mind, is necessary to him who aspires to address public assemblies. Not only is he liable to a sudden attack of nervousness, or to have his thunder "checked in mid-volley" for want of a word or an illustration, but he may be interrupted by an opponent

at the very moment when he is seen to be making his best point; "ugly," insinuating questions may be put to him, for the purpose of disconcerting him; or a concerted effort may be made, by those who dread the effect of his eloquence, to silence him, or, at least, to drown his voice by "oh! oh!"s, yawns, mock cheers, coughing, hisses, calls to order, or any of the other devices which disingenuous opponents know so well how to employ. Erskine was morbidly sensitive to such annoyances; and sometimes his suffering was so keen as absolutely to paralyze his great powers. Dr. Croly, in his "History of the Reign of George III," states that the smallest appearance of indifference in the great advocate's audience checked the flow of his impetuous oratory, and sometimes silenced his thunder "in mid-volley." Aware of this infirmity, a shrewd opposing attorney would plant a sleepy-headed man beneath the Judge, and directly opposite the place where Erskine was wont to address the jury. Exactly at the moment when the speaker was most impassioned, and, working up a thrilling climax, was making the deepest impression upon the twelve men before him, the sleepy hind would make a hideous grimace, and give way to the utmost expression of weariness. An effective pause would be broken in upon by a fearful yawn; and a splendid peroration would be interrupted by a titter in the second row, and the cry of "silence" from the ushers at the too plain indications of a snore. This would cap the climax of the speaker's misery, and, unable to endure the torture, he would abruptly sit down.

Not only was Erskine thus sensitive touching a lack of attention by his audience, but he was equally distressed by an apparent lack of interest manifested by the coun-

sel associated with him in a cause. Noticing on one occasion the absent or desponding look of Garrow, who had aided him in a cause, he whispered: "Who do you think can get on, with that wet blanket of a face of yours before him?" His first speech in the House of Lords was spoiled by the real or pretended indifference of Pitt, who, after listening a few minutes, and taking a note or two as if intending to reply, dashed pen and paper upon the floor with a contemptuous smile. Erskine, it is said, never recovered from this expression of disdain; "his voice faltered, he struggled through the remainder of his speech, and sank into his seat dispirited and shorn of his fame." On another occasion, Pitt rose after Erskine and began: "I rise to reply to the right honorable gentleman (Fox) who spoke last but one. As for the honorable and learned gentleman who spoke last, he did no more than regularly repeat what fell from the gentleman who preceded him, and as regularly weaken what he repeated." Addison tells an amusing anecdote of a counsellor whom he knew, in Westminster Hall, who never pleaded without a piece of pack thread in his hand, which he used to twist about a thumb or a finger all the while he was speaking; the wags of the day called it "the thread of his discourse," because he could not utter a word without it. "One of his clients, who was more merry than wise, stole it from him one day in the midst of his pleading; but he had better have let it alone, for he lost his cause by his jest."

It is said that Daniel Webster once rose to speak by request at a poultry show, when a giant Shanghai got the floor, and burst forth in so defiant and ear-splitting a strain that the orator sat down. It is not every orator, even among the veteran practitioners of the art, who can

preserve his self-command in such moments. Few speakers are as ready, when momentarily nonplused, as Curran was when he was struggling for an illustration of his client's innocence. "It is clear as—as—" (at that moment the sun shone into the court) "clear as yonder sunbeam that now bursts upon us with its splendid coruscations." Not all men have the wit and wisdom of Father Taylor, the famous preacher to sailors in Boston. It is said that once getting involved in a sentence, where clause after clause had been added to each other, and one had branched off in this direction, and another in that, till he was hopelessly entangled, and the starting point was quite out of sight, he paused, and shook himself free of the perplexity, by saying: "Brethren, I don't exactly know where I went *in*, in beginning this sentence, and I don't in the least know where I'm coming out; but one thing I *do* know, I'M BOUND FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN!" So he "took a new departure, and left the broken-backed centipede of a sentence lying where it might, in the track behind him." Even *he*, however, was nonplused once. He had vividly depicted an impenitent sinner, under the figure of a storm-tossed vessel, bowing under the hurricane, every bit of canvas torn from its spars, and driving madly toward the rock-bound coast of Cape Ann. "And how," he cried despairingly, at the climax of his skillfully-elaborated metaphor, "oh! *how* shall the poor sinner be saved?" At this moment an old salt in the gallery, who had hung spell-bound on the orator's lips, his whole soul absorbed in the scene, could restrain himself no longer, and, springing to his feet, he screamed,—“Let him put his helm hard down, and *bear away for Squam!*”

It is related of the witty Scotch advocate, Harry Erskine,

that once, when pleading in London before the House of Lords, he had occasion to speak of certain *curators*, and pronounced the word as in Scotland, with the accent on the first syllable, *curators*. One of the English judges could not stand this, and cried out, "We are in the habit of saying *curator* in this country, Mr. Erskine, following the analogy of the Latin language, in which, as you are aware, the penultimate syllable is long." "I thank your lordship very much," was Erskine's reply; "we are weak enough in Scotland to think that in pronouncing the word *curator*, we follow the analogy of the English language. But I need scarcely say that I bow with pleasure to the opinion of so learned a senator and so great an orator as your lordship." The coolness and readiness of William Pitt in a sudden emergency was strikingly exemplified in his masterly speech made in February, 1783, in reply to Fox. In defending himself from the personal attack of his great adversary, he began quoting the fine lines of Horace touching Fortune (*Odes*, book iii, Ode 29, lines 53-6):

"Laudo manentem: si celeres quatit  
Pennas, resigno quae dedit—"

when suddenly the thought struck him that the next words, "*et mea virtute me involvo*," would appear unbecoming if taken (as they might be) for a self-compliment. Mr. Wraxall, who was present, says that he instantly cast his eyes upon the floor, while a momentary silence elapsed which turned upon him the attention of the whole House. Drawing his handkerchief from his pocket, he passed it over his lips, and then, recovering as it were from his temporary embarrassment, he struck his hand with great force upon the table, and finished the sentence in the most emphatic manner, omitting the words referred to:

"Laudo manentem: si celeres quatit  
Pennas, resigno quae dedit (*et mea  
Virtute me involvo*) probamque  
Pauperiem sine dote quaero."

The effect, we are told, was electric; and "the cheers with which his friends greeted him, as he sat down, were followed with that peculiar kind of buzz which is a higher testimony to oratorical merit than the noisier manifestations of applause."

Burke, in his early days, before his brain had been unhinged by the French Revolution, was sometimes ready and happy in his retorts. Attacking Lord North in one of his speeches, for demanding further supplies amid the most lavish expenditure, he quoted a saying of Cicero: "Magnum vectigal est parsimonia," accenting *vectigal* on the first syllable. Lord North, who was a fine classical scholar, cried out, impatiently, from the Treasury Bench, "*vectīgal, vectīgal!*" "I thank the right honorable gentleman," retorted Burke, "for his correction; and, that he may enjoy the benefit of it, I repeat the words: 'Magnum vectigal est parsimonia.'" At a later period of his life he lost his self-command, and by his irritability of temper was placed at a great disadvantage in the "wars of the giants." A policy of systematic insult was employed by some of his enemies in the House of Commons, to put him down. "Muzzling the lion" was the term applied to this treatment of the greatest political philosopher of the age. Coughing, ironical cheers, affected laughter, assailed him when he arose to speak, which, though he generally disdained to notice them at the time, nevertheless soured his temper, and sometimes paralyzed his tongue. George Selwyn states that on one occasion Burke had just arisen in the House, with some papers in his hand, on the sub-



ject of which he intended to make a motion, when a rough-hewn country member, who had no taste for his magnificent harangues, started up and said: "Mr. Speaker, I hope the honorable gentleman does not mean to read that large bundle of papers, and to bore us with a long speech into the bargain." Burke was so suffocated with rage as to be incapable of speech, and rushed out of the House. "Never before," says Selwyn, "did I see the fable realized of *a lion put to flight by the braying of an ass.*"

There are orators who have so perfect a self-command that hardly anything short of an earthquake can disturb it. They seem to hold their passions in control by the turning of a peg, as did the rider of the Tartar horse of the fairy tale, which at one moment dashed through the air at the rate of a thousand furlongs an hour, and the next stood as motionless as the Caucasus. There are others to whom interruptions and attempts to check the impetuous flow of their speech, appear to be positive blessings. Taunts, sneers, hisses, which ruffle and confuse less fiery spirits, only put them upon their mettle, stimulate them, and call forth their latent powers. Like a mountain stream which has been dammed, the swelling flood of their eloquence acquires increased fury from resistance, and bursting through all its restraints, overwhelms everything in its path. Such an orator was Lord Chatham. While on the one hand he often, by the power of his eye, cowed down an antagonist in the midst of his speech, and threw him into utter confusion by a single glance of scorn or contempt, he himself was only aroused by opposition. Any attempt to impede him in the utterance of offensive words only called forth a more vigorous repetition of the offense. Some of his most brilliant oratorical successes originated

at moments of overbearing impatience, when he was infringing on the rules of debate. Murray (afterward Lord Mansfield), on the other hand, was greatly wanting in nerve, and though the ablest man, as well as the ablest debater, in the House of Commons, according to Lord Waldegrave, bore in agitated silence the assaults of Pitt (afterward Lord Chatham), to which he did not dare to reply. Butler states, in his "Reminiscences," that on one occasion, after Murray had suffered for some time, Pitt stopped, threw his eyes around, then fixing their whole power on his opponent, said: "I must now address a few words to Mr. Solicitor: they shall be few, but they shall be daggers." Murray was agitated; the look was continued; the agitation increased. "Felix trembles," exclaimed Pitt: "he shall hear me some other day." He sat down; Murray made no reply, and a languid debate is said to have shown the paralysis of the House.

Mirabeau, who in physical gifts strongly resembled Chatham, owed likewise many of his oratorical triumphs to opposition. It has been justly said that in retort, in that kind of abrupt, indignant, disdainful repartee which crushes its victim as by a blow, he was, like Chatham, surpassed by none of his contemporaries, and, like Chatham, too, he was peculiarly dexterous in converting a taunt into a victorious rebuke. Patrick Henry, even in his most fiery moments, equally retained his self-possession. His coolness under trying circumstances, when speaking against the Stamp Act in the Virginia House of Burgesses, is familiar to all Americans. As he uttered the celebrated passage: "Cæsar had his Brutus,—Charles the First his Cromwell,—and George the Third"—the cry of "Treason!" was heard from the speaker, and

"Treason, treason!" was echoed from every part of the House. "It was one of those trying moments," says Mr. Wirt, Henry's biographer, "which are decisive of character. Henry faltered not for an instant; but rising to a loftier attitude, and fixing on the speaker an eye of the most determined fire, he finished his sentence with the firmest emphasis,—'*may profit by their example*. If this be treason, make the most of it.'" One of the neatest retorts ever made by a public speaker, was that made by Coleridge to some marks of disapprobation during his democratic lectures at Bristol: "I am not at all surprised that, when the red-hot prejudices of aristocrats are suddenly plunged into the cool element of reason, they should go off with a *hiss*."\*

In this account of the orator's trials we have mentioned only some of the most obvious ones. We have said nothing of the ever-varying moods of feeling to which a person of so much sensibility is inevitably subject, and which make him more or less the puppet of circumstances. There are moments when he feels him-

\* Happy as was this reply, it was surpassed in overwhelming effect by a somewhat irreverent one made by that brilliant but erratic orator, the late Thomas Marshall, of Kentucky. Toward the close of his life, when, unfortunately, his oratorical inspiration was too often artificial, he was making a speech to a crowded audience at Buffalo, when he was interrupted by a political opponent, who, pretending not to hear distinctly, tried to embarrass him by putting his hand to his ear and crying out "Louder!" Mr. Marshall, thereupon, pitched his voice several times on a higher and yet higher key; but the only effect on his tormentor was to draw forth a still more energetic cry of "Louder! please, sir, louder!" At last, being interrupted for the fourth time and in the midst of one of his most thrilling appeals, Mr. Marshall, indignant at the trick, as he now discovered it to be, paused for a moment, and fixing his eye first on his enemy and then on the presiding officer, said: "Mr. President, on the last day, when the angel Gabriel shall have descended from the heavens, and, placing one foot upon the sea and the other upon the land, shall lift to his lips the golden trumpet, and proclaim to the living and to the resurrected dead that time shall be no more, I have no doubt, sir, that some infernal fool from Buffalo will start up and cry out, '*Louder, please, sir, louder!*'"

self in quick electrical sympathy with his audience, and every breath and current of thought and feeling by which it is affected, sweeps through his own soul,—when he feels a stream of mental influence from every person that he addresses, as potent and stimulating as if they were all so many galvanic batteries, with their wires of communication concentrating in his own bosom. There are other times when he feels himself so repelled and chilled by the cold, stern gaze of the faces before him, that all his faculties are benumbed. There are moments of inspiration when he feels a kind of divine afflatus, and, instead of making an effort to speak, he seems to be spoken from; his soul is so flooded with emotion, that he seems to be lifted off his feet, and to tread on air. He speaks at such times in a kind of ecstasy or rapture, and hours may pass without any consciousness of fatigue. There are other moments when his thoughts and ideas, instead of flowing apparently from an inexhaustible fountain, can only be pumped up with great effort; when expression and illustration, instead of flocking to his lips, seem to fly from them. Again, how often when he has carefully prepared a speech, does he have to wait for an opportunity to deliver it, till the fire and glow that attended its preparation have become extinct! How often do the happiest ideas and illustrations flash upon him after he has sat down! He could pulverize his adversary were the debate to be repeated, but his crushing arguments have presented themselves too late. William Wirt had once an afflicting experience of this kind, which, with others that might be cited, tends to show that oratorical victories are due to sudden inspirations, to opportunity or luck, as often as victories in the field. “Had the cause

been to argue over again on the next day," he wrote to a friend, after having grappled with Pinkney, "I could have shivered him, for his discussion revived all my forgotten topics, and, as I lay in my bed on the following morning, arguments poured themselves out before me as a cornucopia. I should have wept at the consideration of what I had lost, if I had not prevented it by leaping out of bed, and beginning to sing and dance like a maniac."

It will be seen by these examples that there are occasions when courage, coolness, presence of mind, and promptness of decision are required of the orator as truly as of the general on the field of battle. Especially does he require them on field-days, in parliamentary duels, in the hand-to-hand encounter of intellects, where the home thrust is often so suddenly given. At such times, it is not enough to be endowed with the rarest intellectual gifts, unless he is able also to command his whole intellectual force the moment he wants to use it. We believe, therefore, that there is no grander manifestation of the power of the human mind, than that of an orator launched suddenly, without warning, on the ocean of improvisation, and spreading his sails to the breeze; coolly yet instantaneously deciding upon his course, and earnestly and even passionately pursuing it; at the same moment guiding his bark amid the rocks and quicksands on the way, and forecasting his future course; now seemingly overwhelmed in a storm of interruption, yet rising stronger from opposition; now suddenly collecting his forces in an interval of applause, battling with and conquering both himself and his audience, and mounting triumphantly billow after billow, until with his auditory he reaches the haven on which his longing eye has been fixed.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE ORATOR'S HELPS.

AS language is the orator's principal instrument of conviction and persuasion, it is evident that a perfect command of it is absolutely indispensable to the highest success. It is evident, too, that such a command does not come by instinct or inspiration, but must be gained by dint of study and painstaking. The power of speaking in clear, vigorous, racy, picturesque, and musical English,—of employing the “aptest words in the aptest places,”—demands of him who would possess himself of it, as careful and persistent culture as that of sounding the depths of metaphysics, or of solving the toughest mathematical problems. But how shall this power be acquired? We answer, partly by the constant practice of composition with the pen (of which we shall speak more at length further on), and partly in two other ways, viz., by reading and translation. Next in value to the frequent use of the pen, is the practice of carefully reading and re-reading the best prose writers and poets, and committing their finest passages to memory, so as to be able to repeat them at any moment without effort. The advantages of this practice are that it not only strengthens the memory, but fills and fertilizes the mind with pregnant and suggestive thoughts, expressed in the happiest language, stores it with graceful images, and, above all, forms the ear to the rhythm and number of

the period, which add so much to its impressiveness and force.

If we study the masterpieces of eloquence we shall find that it is in a large measure to the rhythmus, the harmony of the sentences, that many of the most striking passages owe their effect. The ancient orators paid especial attention to this point. They bestowed incredible pains not only upon the choice of words, but upon their metrical arrangement, so that they might fall most pleasingly upon the ear. Cicero quotes half-a-dozen words from a speech of Carbo, which were so exquisitely selected and collocated that they almost brought his hearers to their feet. It may be thought that so much attention to form may distract the speaker from proper attention to the substance of his discourse, and tempt him to sacrifice sense to sound; and such, indeed, was the effect in the times that succeeded the dissolution of the Roman Republic. Quintilian states that it was the ridiculous boast of certain orators in the days of the declension of genuine eloquence, that their harangues were capable of *being set to music*, and sung upon the stage. So far was this affectation carried by the younger Gracchus, that when he harangued the populace, he used to employ a skillful flute-player, to stand behind him in a position where he could not be observed, and, by the tones of his instrument, regulate the proper pitch of his voice! It was this depravity of taste which gave rise to what Tacitus calls "the very indecent and preposterous, though very frequent expression," that such an orator speaks *smoothly*, and that such a dancer moves *eloquently*. But the abuse of an art is no argument against its use. The example of the Prince of Orators shows that, in cultivating the form, we need not separate it from the sub-

stance; that this is not true art, but the want of art, since for true art the most perfect form is nothing less than the clearest and most transparent appearance of the substance.

It is the melody of a sentence which, so to speak, makes it cut,—which gives it speedy entrance into the mind, causes it to penetrate deeply, and to exercise a magic power over the heart. It is not enough that the speaker's utterances impress the mind of the hearer; they should ring in his ears; they should appeal to the senses, as well as to the feelings, the imagination, and the intellect; then, when they seize at once on the whole man, on body, soul, and spirit, will they “swell in the heart, and kindle in the eyes,” and constrain him, he knows not why, to believe and to obey. Let the student of oratory, then, brood over the finest passages of English composition, both prose and poetry, in his leisure hours, till his mind is surcharged with them; let him read and re-read the ever-varied verse of Shakspeare, the majestic and pregnant lines of Milton, the harmonious and cadenced compositions of Bolingbroke, Grattan, Erskine, Curran, and Robert Hall. Let him dwell upon these passages and recite them till they almost seem his own,—and insensibly, without effort, he will “form to theirs the relish of his soul,” and will find himself adopting their language, and imitating them instinctively through a natural love for the beautiful, and the strong desire which every one feels to reproduce what is pleasing to him. By this process he will have prepared in his mind, so to speak, a variety of oratorical moulds, of the most exquisite shape and pattern, into which the stream of thought, flowing red-hot and molten, from a mind glow-



ing with the fire of declamation, will become fixed, as metal in a foundry takes the form of a noble or beautiful statue.

Will it be said that it is the *utile* and not the *pulchrum* which is the end of oratory; that it turns aside from its purpose when it seeks to please, instead of to convince and persuade; and that the metrical arrangement of words, which is one of the principal charms of poetry, is unfit for prose? We answer that prose has its music, its characteristic melody, as well as poetry, though of a different kind; not that of the lyre or the lute, which easily "weds itself to immortal verse," but a wild and free, an ever-pleasant, though ever-varying music, like that of Nature. It is a music like that of the sobbing seas, or of the whispering winds and falling waters, the wild music which is heard by mountain streams or in the leafy woods of summer. The most perfect prose composition, while it will be devoid of the complex harmony of verse, and of everything that may suggest the idea of rhyme, will yet no less than poetry have its gentle and equable, its impetuous and rapid flow; it will take the ear prisoner by its full and majestic harmonies and its abrupt transitions, as well as by its impressive pauses, and its grateful, though not regularly-recurring cadence. Now since all men, whether educated or uneducated, are so constituted as to enjoy this excellence, which, by giving pleasure, aids the attention, stimulates the memory, and facilitates the admission of argument, who does not see that the orator who fails to avail himself of this aid, neglects one of the most powerful and legitimate instruments of his art?

The practice of storing the mind with choice passages

from the best prose writers and poets, and thus flavoring it with the essence of good literatures, is one which is commanded both by the best teachers and by the example of some of the most celebrated orators, who have adopted it with signal success. Dr. King, author of "Anecdotes of My Own Time" (published in 1760), states that, in order that his pupils might acquire the art of speaking with correctness and facility, he used to advise them to get by heart a page of some English classic, and the method, he says, was often attended with complete success. Chrysostom did not begin to preach till he had enriched his mind with the spoils of classic learning. William Pitt, in his youth, read the poets, Greek, Latin and English, with the closest attention, and deposited in the cells of his memory many fine passages, which, as we have already seen, he afterward wove into his speeches in the happiest manner, and with the most telling effect. By his father's advice he read and re-read Barrow's sermons, to secure copiousness of language; and the finest parts of Shakspeare he had by heart. Fox began early to steep his mind in classic literature, and never ceased to linger lovingly over the pages of Homer, Euripides, Virgil, and Ovid, till the day of his death. He was very fond of the Odyssey, and also of Euripides, who, among the Greek dramatists, seems to have been his favorite. He declares that of all poets this most argumentative dramatist appears to him, "without exception, the most useful for a public speaker." Virgil was the Latin poet whom he most earnestly and fondly studied; and among the Italians, Ariosto, whom he preferred to Tasso, for the luxuriance of his imagery and the grand sweep of his imagination. In giving advice to others, he dwelt with peculiar em-

phasis on this branch of reading. "I am of opinion," he says, "that the study of good authors, and especially of poets, ought never to be intermitted by any man who is to speak or write for the public, or, indeed, who has any occasion to tax his imagination, whether it be for argument, for illustration, for ornament, for sentiment, or for any other purpose."

Burke's speeches abound with poetical gems, especially from Virgil and Milton. Erskine, who spoke probably the finest and richest English ever uttered by an advocate, devoted himself for two years, before his call to the bar, to the study of literature. He committed a large part of Milton to memory, and so familiarized himself with Shakspeare, that it is said that he could almost, like Porson, have held conversations on all subjects for days together in the phrases of the great English dramatist. It was here that he acquired, not only his rich fund of ideas, but the fine choice of words, the vivid and varied imagery, that distinguished his style. Daniel Webster was a profound student of a few great poets, especially the two just named, and in his reply to Hayne brief passages from both are introduced with signal felicity and effect. William Pinkney owed his intellectual affluence and his polished style to a similar cause. From his youth he made it a rule never to see a fine idea without committing it to memory. Rufus Choate says the result of this practice was "the most splendid and powerful English *spoken* style I ever heard." Choate himself drunk deep at the fountains not only of science and history, but of philosophy and belles-lettres. To increase his command of language, his *copia verborum*, and to avoid sinking into cheap and bald fluency, as well as to give elevation, energy, sonorousness

and refinement to his vocabulary, he read aloud daily, during a large part of his life, a page or more from some fine English author. He was a profound student of words, and made all the realms of literature tributary to his vocabulary. "In literature," he used to say, "you find ideas. There one should daily replenish his stock. The whole range of polite literature should be vexed for thoughts." Literature, again, he contended, was necessary to get intellectual enthusiasm. "All the discipline and customs of social life, in our time, tend to crush emotion and feeling. Literature alone is brimful of feeling."

Bossuet owed the kingly splendor of his style largely to classical studies. The great exemplars of Greece and Rome were always before his eyes. From the freshness and picturesqueness of Homer, the indignant brevity of Tacitus, and the serried strength of Thucydides, he drew that vigor of style, which, when enriched by the sublime imagery of the Prophets and the tender pathos of the Evangelists, placed him among the first of Christian orators. The "Iliad" and "Odyssey" he had thumbed till he knew them nearly all by heart. His passion for Homer, whom he always called "divine," was so great, that he recited his verses in his sleep. It was, however, to the Old Testament, chiefly,—to Isaiah, with his unsurpassed sublimity,—to Jeremiah, with his intense pathos,—to Ezekiel, with his gorgeous coloring,—to Daniel, and the other lyrical poets of the Bible, who have never been surpassed as singers, or as interpreters of the human heart and prophets of the conscience,—that he was chiefly indebted for his inspiration. Fisher Ames was also a profound student of the Scriptures, especially the Old Testament, with whose ideas and images his mind was deeply imbued,—an example which cannot be too earnestly

commended to every public speaker, since the Bible, being at once the most human and the most divine of books, is better fitted than any other to move the common heart of humanity. One of the greatest oratorical successes of Richard Lalor Sheil was achieved at a great popular meeting, by taking the first chapter of Exodus for his theme, and quoting, with the Bible in his hand, "with a solemnity and effect electrical on the sympathies of a religious and enthusiastic people, the words of the inspired writer, and founding on them an impassioned appeal to his countrymen to persevere in their career,—to press onward to the goal appointed for them, heedless of the fears of the timid or the suggestions of the compromising."

Along with the reading of the best and most idiomatic English authors, the practice of translation will also be found invaluable to the young orator. It is one of the best keys with which to unlock the treasures of his own tongue. In hunting for fit words for foreign idioms, and felicities of expression to match the felicities of the original, he will be at the same time enriching his vocabulary and taking a lesson in extempore speech. In one respect this practice is preferable to original composition, for it gives a clew to niceties and elegancies of diction which the translator would neither be likely to hit upon himself, nor to find in any English writer, and at the same time it saves him from the servility of being a copyist. He has a model before him, of which he is to catch and reproduce the life and spirit, instead of making a cold and mechanical copy; he paints a similar picture, but with different pigments; and thus his pride of originality is gratified, while he is not compelled to rely on his own narrow resources.

We are aware that there is a growing distaste to-day,

especially in the West, for the study of the dead languages; but we are persuaded by much experience and observation, that the study is worth all the time and toil it costs, simply on account of the command it gives of language. Who can estimate the facility of expression, to say nothing of the intellectual discipline and the acquisition of new ideas, which must accrue from this constant wrestling with the thoughts of the great writers of antiquity in order to understand and translate them? Could any better or more ingenious contrivance be devised to form an artist in words,— to give one a command of “thought’s indispensable tool,” language,— than this perpetual comparison of the terms and idioms of two tongues, to discover those that are equivalent; this incessant weighing and measuring of phrases, to find which will give the exact shade, or, at least, the nearest approach to the divine beauty, of the original? Above all, what aptitude for extempore speech must result from this practice, pursued for years, in the decomposition and re-composition of sentences,— of combining and recombining their separate words in all possible ways, so as to hit upon the arrangement which will at once convey the thought most perfectly, and at the same time give the most exquisite delight to the ear,— and, again, of balancing one sentence against another, in order, by a proper mixture of long ones with short, periodic with loose, to give to the whole that unity, measure and harmony, which will not only render it luminous with meaning, but make it sink deeply and linger long in the mind?

There is no doubt that some of the most eloquent speakers of ancient and modern times have acquired their magical command of words in this way. Cicero thus stocked his vocabulary from the Greek. Lord Ches-

terfield, one of the most elegant and polished talkers and orators of Europe, translated much both from English into French and from French into English. Owing in part to this practice, a certain elegance of style became habitual to him, and it would have given him more trouble, he says, to express himself inelegantly than he had ever taken to avoid this defect. Chatham turned and returned the pages of Demosthenes into English. William Pitt, his son, translated for years aloud to himself and to his tutor. Following Horace's rule:

"Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus  
Interpres,"

he read a pretty long passage in the original, and then turned it at once into regular English sentences, aiming to give the ideas with great exactness, and, at the same time, to express himself with idiomatic accuracy and ease, and pausing, when he was at a loss, for the fitting word, until it came. Of course, he had often to stop, at first; but by degrees he acquired a greater mastery and readiness; and in after life he always ascribed to this practice his extraordinary command of language, which enabled him to give every idea its most felicitous expression, and to pour out an unbroken stream of thought, hour after hour, without once hesitating for a word, or recalling a phrase, or sinking for a moment into looseness or inaccuracy in the structure of his sentences.\* Lord Mansfield, who in his youth had been an enthusiast in classic study, and in whose brain, according to Cowper,

"Memory, like the bee that's fed  
From Flora's balmy store,  
The quintessence of all he read  
Had treasured up before,"

\* Goodrich's "British Eloquence," 552.

turned every one of Cicero's orations into English a second time.

Lord Brougham was an enthusiastic advocate of translation, and also of classic imitation as a help to the orator. In a letter addressed in 1823, at the mature age of forty-four, to Macaulay's father, he says: "I know from experience that nothing is half so successful in these times (bad though they be) as what has been formed on the Greek models. I use a very poor instance in giving my own experience; but I do assure you that both in courts of law and Parliament, and even to mobs, I have never made so much play (to use a very modern phrase) as when I was almost translating from the Greek. I composed the peroration of my speech for the queen, in the House of Lords, after reading and repeating Demosthenes for three or four weeks, and I composed it twenty times over at least, and it certainly succeeded in a very extraordinary degree, and far above any merits of its own." Rufus Choate, too, was a tireless translator. The culture of expression, he held, should be a specific study, distinct from the invention of thought. Translation should be practiced for the double object of keeping fresh in the recollection the words already acquired, and to tax and torment invention and discovery for additional rich and expressive terms. Like Keats and Gautier, he loved words for themselves,—for their look, their aroma, their color,—and was always on the look-out for the choicest and most picturesque phrases. Tacitus was his chosen author, and, in the busiest days of his ever busy life, he would always give five minutes, if no more, to his task. One of his chief objects was to stock his memory with synonyms. For every word he translated he would rack his brain



and search his books till he had found five or six corresponding English words. He aimed also to enrich his vocabulary with suggestive words,—those that have a spell in them for the memory and imagination. He knew that sometimes even one such word, fitly spoken, has been sufficient to wither an antagonist, or to electrify an audience. “You don’t want,” said he to a student, “a diction gathered from the newspapers, caught from the air, common and unsuggestive; but you want one whose every word is full freighted with suggestion and association, with beauty and power.” Like William Pinkney, he regarded the study of dictionaries as a great fertilizer of language, and spent many hours in conning their pages.

It is hardly necessary to say that one of the best helps to the acquisition of skill in oratory is a profound study of the best specimens of eloquence. As the young painter or sculptor is not content with text-books and lectures, but spends months or years in the galleries of Florence, Rome, and a score of other places, in order to learn how the great masters of form and color wrought their miracles, so the oratorical student should dissect and analyze the great masterpieces of eloquence, and endeavor, so far as possible, to “pluck out the heart of their mystery,”—to learn the secret of their charm. Let him not confine himself to reading fine passages, such as are to be found in “Academical Speakers” and treatises on elocution, for the exclusive reading of these would be misleading, and, on the whole, more injurious than helpful. A speech of the highest order will always contain some of those electric and stimulating qualities which we look for in books of specimens; but the striking metaphor, the startling appeal, the biting sarcasm, the bold invective, the daring apostrophe, which

characterize these selected passages, form but an insignificant portion of a long discourse, and sometimes they are wanting altogether to speeches which are models of luminous statement or of powerful and logical reasoning.

The true orator does not strive to be brilliant; he seeks only to convince and persuade,—to secure a client's acquittal, to show the unsoundness of an adversary's principles or reasoning, or to obtain a vote for a certain measure. It has been justly said that it was not with the decorated hilt of his sword that the old knight cleaved in twain the skull of his enemy; nor was it the shining plume on his helmet that protected his own head. Often the pith and marrow of a speech lie in no part which a school-boy would choose for declamation, but in the exquisite arrangement of its arguments, in the masterly clearness of its statements, in the accrescent energy of its appeals. It was said of Lord Mansfield, who divided the honors of oratory in the House of Lords with Chatham, that he was "eloquent by his wisdom." He affected no sallies of imagination, or bursts of passion; but secured attention and assent to all he said by his constant good sense, flowing in apt terms and in the clearest method. He excelled, above all, in the statement of a case, arranging the facts in an order so lucid, and with so nice a reference to the conclusions to be founded on them, that the hearer felt inclined to be convinced before he was in possession of the arguments. A writer who often heard George Wood, the leader of the New York Bar some thirty years ago, says that his speech was as plain as that of a Quaker. The thought was as free from the refraction of words as is the light of a planet seen through one of Clark's object-glasses.

Count Montalembert, one of the most brilliant French orators of the present century, was a profound student of British eloquence. He knew almost by heart the principal speeches of the great orators of England and Ireland, and in his youth was wont to relate with impassioned ardor the Parliamentary debates to his schoolmates. The fiery Grattan and the splendid contest which he maintained against the Parliamentary union of England and Ireland, held a conspicuous place in his glowing pictures. But above all, Burke was the hero of his idolatry, and the portrait of the great Irishman hung in the Count's study till the last day of his life. The speeches against the American War and Warren Hastings,—and even those in which Burke vehemently denounced the French Revolution, were all analyzed or repeated by Montalembert to an admiring and electrified audience.

Again, besides studying the masterpieces of eloquence in print, the oratorical aspirant should listen to the best living speakers. As the young bird, that is learning to fly, watches its parents, and with its eyes fixed on them, spreads its unsteady wings, follows in their path, and copies their motions, so the young man who would master the art of oratory, should watch closely the veteran practitioners of the art, and assiduously note and imitate their best methods, till, gaining confidence in the strength of his pinions, he may venture to cease circling about his nest, and boldly essay the eagle flights of eloquence. It was thus, in part, that Grattan's oratorical genius was trained and directed. Going in his youth to London, he was attracted to the debates in Parliament by the eloquence of Lord Chatham, which acted with such a spell upon his mind as henceforth to fix his destiny. To emulate the

fervid and electric oratory of that great leader, reproducing his lofty conceptions in new and original forms,—for he was no servile copyist,—was henceforth the object of his greatest efforts and of his most fervent aspirations. The genius of Rufus Choate, original and distinctive as it unquestionably was, was fired in a great degree by listening, when he was a law-student at Washington, to the fervid eloquence of William Pinkney, whom he not a little resembled.

Among all the helps of the orator, there is no auxiliary which he may employ with greater advantage than the pen. Cicero calls it *optimus et praestantissimus dicendi effector ac magister*. He says that in writing on a subject we give more than usual attention to it, and thus many things are suggested to us of which we should otherwise never have thought. We choose the best words, and arrange them in the best order, and a habit is thus formed of employing always the best language; so that as a boat, when the rowers rest upon their oars, will continue to move by the impulse previously given, so a speaker who has been accustomed to use his pen, will, when he is obliged to utter anything extempore, be apt to do it with the same grace and finish as if it had been previously composed. There can be no doubt that the frequent use of the pen helps to give not only clearness and precision, but force and vividness, to the speaker's thought. It is not enough that the speaker's theme has been profoundly meditated and digested; besides the *cogitatio et commentatio* upon which Cicero insists, there should be the *assidua ac diligens scriptura*. In this way, and in this way only, can the speaker acquire and perpetuate that command and general accuracy of language,—that copious-

ness in the diction, precision in the selection of terms, and close articulation in the construction,—which alone can insure the highest excellence. By this means he will not only make luminous ideas which, when shut up in the mind, are apt to preserve a certain haziness, but he will open richer veins of thought, and, above all, will be able to lay up in his memory a supply of weapons ready for any emergency. Important sentences and passages thus carefully wrought out beforehand in the laboratory of thought, can hardly fail, even if not delivered exactly *verbatim*, of being more effective ordinarily than those which are thrown off hastily in the hurry of debate, when there is no time to grope about for the most apt and telling words, and the expression must be effected at the first stroke.

In thus commending the use of the pen, we would not counsel a speaker, except in the case of a eulogy or other formal address, to write out the whole of a speech, and “learn it by heart,” even to every little beggarly particle. No doubt there have been orators who have done this with considerable success. Edward Everett adopted this method; but though years of practice and an unfailing memory enabled him to give many passages of what he had thus “conned and learned by rote,” in the free, off-hand manner of impromptu address, yet there was always visible, even in his happiest efforts, a certain air of constraint and artificiality. It was rarely that the most impassioned burst of oratory was delivered with such a perfection of concealed art, as not to excite a suspicion in the hearer’s mind, that, like Sheridan’s cut and dry exclamation of “Good God! Mr. Speaker,” it had not been carefully studied before-hand. But if this master of memorized speech did not succeed in cheating his hearers,

still more signal has been the failure of his disciples, most of whom have succeeded only in reproducing his frigidity and monotonous elegance, without being able to impart to their recitations the air of sudden suggestion which he was occasionally so fortunate as to command. Tacitus says, as truly as tersely, that *magna eloquentia, sicut flamma, materiâ alitur, et motibus excitatur, et urendo clarescit*,—which William Pitt translated: "It is with eloquence as with a flame. It requires fuel to feed it, motion to excite it, and *it brightens as it burns.*" The practice of memoriter speaking has, unquestionably, some advantages, and the fact that it was the favorite method of the ancient orators goes far to commend it. If the speaker has a tenacious memory, and can commit a speech rapidly, he is relieved of all anxiety about his thought and style, and is left free to throw all his force into the proper work of delivery. Having the whole speech in his mind, he knows the relations of the several parts to each other, and is thus "able to graduate the degrees of force, pitch, and rapidity of movement appropriately to every part; to return to the key-note and initial movement as often as he may be required, and to manage his pauses and transitions so as to produce their true and proper effect." On the other hand, speaking from memory, in most cases, not only involves a great amount of disagreeable drudgery, and almost necessitates a break-down when, from interruption or sudden nervousness, a passage which forms a necessary link in the chain is forgotten, but it prevents the speaker from feeling the pulse of his audience, catching inspiration from their looks or applause, meeting objections with which he is interrupted, and varying his address with the varying exigences of the hour.

But while speeches should not, except in rare cases, be written out and memorized entire, yet important passages, we think, should be; and, in every case where one is to speak on an important occasion, he should make himself so completely master of his theme by patient thought and frequent use of the pen, that the substance and the method, the matter and the order, of his ideas shall be perfectly familiar to him. Nor is it enough that he possess himself of sharply defined thoughts, and the precise order of their delivery; he must brood over them hour by hour till "the fire burns" and the mind glows with them,—till not only the arguments and illustrations have been supplied to the memory, but the most felicitous terms, the most vivid, pregnant, and salient phrases, have been suggested, which he will recall, to an extent that will surprise him, by the matter in which they are imbedded, and with which they are connected by the laws of association. Proceeding in this way, he will unite, in a great measure, the advantages of the written and the spoken styles. Avoiding the miserable bondage of the speaker who servilely adheres to manuscript,—a procedure which produces, where the effort of memory has not been perfect, a feeling of constraint and frigidity in the delivery, and, where it has been perfect, an appearance of artificiality in the composition,—he will weave into his discourse the passages which he has polished to the last degree of art, and he will introduce also anything that occurs during the inspiration of delivery. He will have all the electrical power, the freshness, fire, and fervor of the orator who does not write, and at the same time much of the condensation, elegance, and exquisite finish of him who coins his phrases in the deliberation of his study.

There is no doubt that, in point of fact, almost every great orator writes passages which he commits to memory. Sheridan prepared his impromptus beforehand to an extent which seems incredible to one not familiar with his habits. Indeed, one of the chief defects of his speeches was the lack of *callida junctura*,—the transitions from his carefully-conned declamation to his extempore statements being perceptible to everybody. As he was unable to keep for an instant on the wing, there was no gradation, and he suddenly dropped from tropes and rhetoric into a style that was strangely bald and lax. One of the secrets of Canning's elegance and polish of style was his constant practice of writing in conjunction with extemporaneous speech. On every important debate "he wrote much beforehand, and composed more in his mind, which flowed forth spontaneously, and mingled with the current of his thoughts, in all the fervor of the most prolonged and excited discussion. Hence while he had great ease and variety, he never fell into that negligence and looseness of style which we always find in a purely extemporaneous speaker." Many of Curran's winged passages, which seem born of the inspiration of the moment, were elaborated in the closet. Like Canning, he dovetailed them so skillfully with the others as to make them appear impromptu. "My dear fellow," said he to Phillips, "the day of inspiration has gone by. Everything I ever said, which was worth remembering,—my *de bene esses*, my white horses, as I call them,—were all carefully prepared." Some of the most electric passages of Brougham's speeches were written and rewritten again and again. Indeed, he expressly declares that the perfection of public speaking consists in introducing a prepared



passage with effect. "It is worthy of note," he says, "for the use of the student in rhetoric, that Erskine wrote down word for word the passage about the savage and his bundle of sticks. His mind having acquired a certain excitement and elevation, and received an impetus from the tone and quality of the matured and premeditated composition, retained that impetus after the impelling cause had died away."

The practice of Plunket, so far as it went, was admirable; he used, it is said, to prepare a few keen, epigrammatic, or passionate sentences, in which to concentrate the effect of extemporaneous passages that led up to them. Sheil, who spoke always with an air of passion and abandonment, which nothing, apparently, but the enthusiasm of the moment could inspire, elaborated the great passages of his speeches with the utmost nicety and finish. They were hewn, chiselled, and polished with all the tender care of a sculptor, rehearsed with all their possible effects, and kept in reserve till the critical moment when, by contrast with other parts, they would shine forth most resplendently. Montalembert polished and repolished some parts of his orations, which seemed impromptu, with ceaseless care.\* Bossuet, on the other hand, disliked writing, which only distracted him. He dashed down rapidly on paper, texts, citations, and arguments suitable to the theme and the occasion; meditated deeply on this rough document, in the morning of the day he was to preach; and thus developing his discourse in his mind, he passed men-

\* Sainte-Beuve, speaking of his combination of the written with the improvised parts of his speeches, says: "Le tout est enveloppé dans une sorte de circulation vive qui ne laisse apercevoir aucun intervalle, et qui fait que les jets du moment, les pensées méditées ou notés, les morceaux tout faits, se rejoignent, s'enchaînent avec souplesse, et se meuvent comme les membres d'un même corps."

tally through his sermon two or three times, reading the paper before him, and altering and improving, as though the whole had been written. A famous temperance lecturer used to say of his practice that the main body of his addresses was in the language of the moment, but that "special howls" were carefully prepared.

Macaulay is said to have declared that he dared not write a speech that he was to deliver, on account of the danger of falling into the style of an essay, which he deemed altogether unfit for a public speech. It is notorious, however, that in his parliamentary efforts he generally "talked like a book"; and, indeed, some of his speeches are but reproductions of his masterly essays. His speech in 1830, on The Civil Disabilities of the Jews, is the legitimate offspring of the Essay of 1829. That in early life he sometimes wrote and conned his eloquent periods is evident from the following incident related in an English work published about twenty years ago: At the annual anti-slavery meeting in 1826, Mr. Macaulay delivered the first of the brilliant orations which gave him fame as a public speaker. At its close a gentleman asked him to furnish a report of it for the London "Morning Chronicle," saying that he spoke so rapidly, and the excellence of the speech depended so much on the collocation of the words, that only its author could do it justice in a report. At first, Mr. Macaulay hesitated; but, on being pressed, said that he would think of it. On going to the office of the "Chronicle" in the evening, the writer found, he says, a large packet containing a *verbatim* report of the speech as spoken. The brilliant passages were marked in pencil, and the whole manuscript had been evidently well thumbed over,—showing that no school-

boy had ever more laboriously and faithfully committed to memory his speech in "Enfield's Speaker," than had the great historian of the age "learned by heart" his first public oration. As he advanced in years, this habit grew upon him so strongly, that at last it was a positive pain and embarrassment to him to be called upon to speak even a dozen sentences off-hand. Long and careful preparation was essential to him; and, even with preparation, he was nervous, anxious, uneasy, until he had poured out his cogitations. "On the nights, too, on which he intended to speak, a child might have discerned the fact. He sat with his arms crossed; his head was frequently thrown back, as if he were attentively surveying the roof; and though the Speaker of the House of Commons was a perfectly impartial man, and filled his office to the satisfaction of every member, one could scarcely doubt that he often relieved a poet and an orator from his uneasiness by naming Mr. Macaulay at an early period of the evening."

We have heard from the lips of the late Judge Story a similar and more striking anecdote of the celebrated American advocate, William Pinkney.\* Though a consummate master of the arts of extempore speaking, he often wrote out the principal parts of his speeches, in order to preserve a correct and polished diction. He believed, with the great orators of antiquity, that this practice is absolutely necessary, if one would acquire and preserve a style at once correct and graceful in public speaking, which otherwise is apt to degenerate into colloquial negligence and tedious verbosity. Alexander Hamilton, in a great libel cause which he argued, wrote out

\* See the author's "Hours with Men and Books," pp. 105-7, for this anecdote.

his argument the night before, and then tore it up. "Always prepare, investigate, compose a speech," said Rufus Choate to a student, "pen in hand. Webster always wrote when he could get a chance." The reasons which Mr. Choate assigned for this practice, were that only in this way can a speaker be sure that he had got to the bottom of his subject, or have the confidence and ease flowing from the certainty that he cannot break down. The written matter, he added, "must be well memorized." He himself acted on this rule. In the court-room he always spoke before a pile of manuscript, covered with his cabalistic "pot-hooks," to which, however, he only occasionally referred.\* The night before addressing a jury, he would sometimes write all night. It is hardly necessary to say that in all cases where carefully finished passages are introduced into an extempore speech, it is a part of the speaker's art, and one that requires the nicest skill, to blend the impromptu and the prepared parts into an indistinguishable whole. Any clumsiness that betrays the joints,—that reveals the secret of the "purple patches,"—will destroy the charm. An English writer advises the speaker, who would conceal his art in such

\* In his journal, May, 1843, Mr. Choate wrote: "I am not to forget that I am, and must be, if I would live, a student of forensic rhetoric. . . . A wide and anxious survey of that art and that science teaches me that careful, constant writing is the parent of ripe speech. It has no other. But that writing must always be rhetorical writing, that is, such as might in some parts of some speech be uttered to a listening audience. *It is to be composed as in and for the presence of an audience.* So it is to be intelligible, perspicuous, pointed, terse, with image, epithet, turn, advancing and impulsive, full of *generalizations, maxims*, illustrating the sayings of the wise." In every part of study, Mr. Choate relied greatly on the pen, which he regarded as the corrector of vagueness of thought and expression. "In translating," says Mr. E. G. Parker, in his "Reminiscences," "in mastering a difficult book, in preparing his arguments, in collecting his evidence, he was always armed with that, to him, potent weapon."

cases, to connect the elaborated part of his speech with what has incidentally fallen in debate; "when you come to that premeditated and finest part, hesitate and appear to boggle; catch at some expression that shall fall short of your idea, and then seem to hit at last upon the true thing. This has always an extraordinary effect, and gives the air of extempore genius to what you say."\* Lord Brougham appears to have acted, at times, with imperfect success, on a hint like this. "When he seemed to pause in search of thoughts or words," says Lord Granville, "we knew that he had a sentence ready cut and dried."

It may be objected,—indeed, it often has been objected to speeches thus carefully prepared,—that they are too elaborate; that they are likely to lack naturalness and simplicity; that, in short, they smell of the midnight oil. If such, in any case, is the effect of preparation,—if the orator, in the effort to perfect his speech, is tempted to aim merely at tickling the ear, and he thus, by introducing beauties of thought or expression which have no relation to the subject, and no tendency to facilitate its comprehension, draws attention not to his theme but to himself or his rhetorical skill,—the objection is, indeed, fatal. The best style, written or spoken, is not like a painted window which transmits the light of day tinged with a hundred hues, and diverts the attention from its proper use to the pomp and splendor of the artist's doing; it is a transparent, colorless medium, which simply lets the thought be seen, without suggesting a thought about the medium itself. But if the elaboration, however great,

\* "Parliamentary Logic," by the Right Hon. William Gerard Hamilton, London, 1798.

be for legitimate ends,—if the energy and harmony, the vivid images, the “apt words in apt places,” which result from it, aid attention, and facilitate the admission of argument, at the same time that they delight the hearer, the delight being aimed at only for an ulterior and higher purpose,—then it is hardly possible for the speaker to take too much pains. The utmost elaboration of this kind is not only pardonable but praiseworthy. Naturalness and simplicity, the last and most excellent graces which can belong to a speaker, so far from being opposed to it, can be attained in no other way. The utmost art,—art in the sense of a deliberate effort to adapt the means to the ends, and to do what is to be done in the most perfect manner,—is here the truest nature.\*

If the Prince of Orators, instead of trusting to impromptu inspiration, was indefatigable in his efforts to prepare himself for his public discourses, shall a modern speaker, of inferior powers, be forbidden to do so? That Demosthenes *could* speak extemporaneously, is well known; but it is equally well known that he never did so when he could help it; and so diligent was his preparation, that the very objection we are considering was urged by his enemies against his oratory,—that it smelt of the lamp. Regarding oratory as an art, and as an art in which proficiency can come only by intense labor, he left nothing to chance which he could secure by forethought and skill,—nothing to the inspiration of the moment, which deliberate industry could make certain. He knew, doubtless, what every great speaker,—what every writer, indeed,—knows perfectly well, that even the so-called flashes of inspiration

\* “They came to him too naturally not to have been studied,” says George Sand of the vehement words of one of her heroes.

are the reward, not of the indolent man, but of him who is usually most laborious in his preparation. It is *after* such preparation, due rest having meanwhile been taken, that, as it has been happily said, the most unlooked-for felicities, the happiest thoughts and expressions, often suddenly flash into unbidden existence under the glow of speaking,—felicities of which, while in the act of preparation, the mind may never have caught a glimpse. But then this happy excitement, this exaltation of all the faculties, is only possible to the mind when prolonged preparation has suggested all the trains of thought *likely* to stimulate emotion, and has already in part stimulated it; and, above all, has insured that self-possession in the treatment of the subject without which the boasted “*inspiration*” never visits, or is likely to visit, the most eloquent speaker. “It is preparation which piles the wood, and lays the sacrifice, and then the celestial fire may perchance descend. The entire water in the vessel must have its whole temperature slowly raised to the boiling-point; and then, and not till then, it ‘*flashes into steam.*’” The habit of careful and laborious preparation will no more rob the orator of his fervor than faithful drilling robs the soldier of his fire. It is not the raw volunteer, but the soldier who has practiced the exercises of the parade-ground, that will do best in the fight; and we may add, too, that the sentences which have been carefully knit together in the closet will often transmit the glow of passion as the solid and well-trained phalanx burns with martial fire, and hurls itself like a thunderbolt upon the enemy.

The question has been asked: Why is it that men who have ranked high as writers, have so often miserably

failed as speakers? Why is it that they who may be said on paper to roar you in the ears of the groundlings an 'twere any lion, aggravate their voice on the platform like a sucking dove? Examples of this are so numerous that they will suggest themselves to every reader. Addison and Gibbon attempted oratory in the British Senate only to "fall flat and shame their worshippers." The latter tells us that the bad speakers filled him with apprehension, the good ones with despair. Sir Philip Francis, who was so ready and powerful with the pen, was hesitating and unready in speech. Pope was tongue-tied in a large company, and Irving was dumb at dinners given in his honor. When Béranger was elected to the National Assembly of France, he sat one day under protest, and refused to go again. With the grace of La Fontaine and the philosophic wit of Voltaire, he was as shy as Dominie Sampson, and declared in a letter to the press from his garret, that to address more than six persons was beyond his power. Cicero was an exception to the rule, and so in modern times have been a few men in England and France; but the instances are too few to invalidate it. "Sir James Mackintosh," says Macaulay, "spoke essays, Mr. Fox wrote debates; his history reads like a powerful reply thundered from the front Opposition-bench at three in the morning." This statement gives, we think, even too favorable an impression of Mr. Fox's abilities as a writer. So far is he from writing with power, that all the fire of his genius seems to be extinguished when he takes up his pen, and we can with difficulty believe that the fervid orator who delivered the speech on the Westminster Scrutiny is the same man who wrote the History of the Reign of James II.



Being both wrote and spoke well; but graceful and flowing as is his written style, it is not free from the faults which we are apt to find in the compositions of one who declaims on paper. Always vivid and animated, it sometimes tires the reader with repetitions and amplifications to which, when set off by his fine person and pleasing intonations, an audience might listen with profit and delight. Brougham was one of the giants of the senate; but he wrote as if he were speaking from the woolsack, and his big words and labyrinthine sentences violated the first laws of literary composition. Dr. Johnson wanted to try his hand in the House of Commons; but though he declared public speaking to be a mere knack, it is possible that the very qualities which made him the monarch of the club-room, and gave him such power with the pen, would have prevented his success as an orator. A succession of vivid, pointed, epigrammatic sentences, which have a telling effect in the pauses or quick turns of conversation, do not make a speech. Horne Tooke failed in the House of Commons, in spite of his tact, talent, self-possession, and long practice at the hustings. Even Mr. Gladstone is no exception to the rule. "Too subtle a thinker and too conscientious a mind to attain the highest kind of oratory, the object of which is to persuade by carrying, as it were by storm, the feelings and the passions of the audience, he is yet clear, pointed, and vigorous in debate; but, on the other hand, no one can deny that he is an obscure and intricate writer. He seems graceful as a swan on the waters of parliamentary strife; but when he takes up his pen, he is like the same when it leaves its native element and waddles awkwardly on the ground."

The explanation of this phenomenon is not difficult. A moment's reflection will show us that the *elegantia umbratica*, at which the writer aims, is an elaborate form of beauty which is unsuited to the strife of business, and the tumult of a public assembly. The language and style which are most impressive in the drawing-room, are utterly ineffective upon the platform. The fine tooling and delicate tracery of the cabinet artist are lost upon a building of colossal proportions. It is plain, therefore, that very different, even quite opposite, intellectual gifts are required to form a good writer and a good speaker. Abstraction of mind, seclusion from the din and tumult of public assemblies, unwearied patience in gathering the materials of composition, and exquisite taste, that will be satisfied only with the utmost nicety and finish of style, are demanded by the writer; while quickness of thought, boundless self-confidence, tact in seizing upon the most available, though not the most satisfactory, arguments, and a certain intellectual coarseness that is not offended by a slip or a blunder, are necessary to the orator. Again, a writer may spend an hour in choosing a word, and a day in polishing a sentence; he may watch for a simile "as the idle boy watches for the lurking place of the adder"; but, as the author of *Lacon* has observed, eloquence, to produce its full effect, must start from the head of the orator, as Pallas from the brain of Jove, clad in full panoply. The fastidious writer may blot out words and substitute new ones by the hundred, and it is his own fault if the fact is known to his dearest friend; but if an orator chances to boggle once with his tongue, the detection is immediate, and the punishment certain. Great writers, too, having a reputation to support, often

suffer as speakers from a self-defeating over-anxiety to do well; like Sheridan, who was said to have been all his life afraid of the author of "The School for Scandal," they are frightened at the shadow of their own reputation.

Among the youthful orator's helps, there is no doubt that *conversation* may be made one of the most serviceable. Of course, there is a material difference between public speaking and private; yet the fact that one is monologue, and the other dialogue, does not prevent the latter from being a material aid toward the acquisition of ease and self-possession in public speech, especially in debate. Quickness of thought, skill in seizing upon the strong points of a subject, exactness of statement, adroitness in parry and thrust, facility of expression, and general mental activity, are all cultivated by conversation, and are at the same time the qualities most needed in public discussion. Instead of talking to five or ten persons in a public address, you are talking to hundreds or thousands, but "the one exercise has helped for the other, as singing in a parlor helps to sing in a choir, or as shooting with an air-gun, at ten paces, helps one to shoot straight with a rifle, at a hundred."

We cannot conclude this chapter without reminding the student of oratory that there is no calling in which faith in one's self, so necessary to all successful exertion, is more necessary than in that of the orator. After he has made all possible preparation for a public effort, he should, as far as possible, dismiss all anxiety about the result. If, instead of having this self-confidence, he distrusts his own powers, and becomes self-critical, acting continually as a spy upon himself, he will almost certainly be embarrassed and crippled in his speech, if he

does not break down altogether. Suspicion here, as elsewhere, tends to beget the very evil that is deprecated. The mind is apt to avenge any distrust of its faithfulness. Time, practice, and patience only can give the perfect ease, coolness, and self-possession which are essential to perfect success,—that profound faith in one's abilities which acts as a charm upon all the powers of the mind, —as time only can bestow that practical instinct of skill which gives the intuitive law of success, and shows the only way to reach it. And here we may speak of a phenomenon noted by some speakers which is full of encouragement to tyros in oratory who are appalled by the Herculean labors and the difficulties which “cast their shadows before” them, as they toil up the steeps of excellence. We allude to that law of the mind by which its muscles, like those of the body, becomes autonomic, a law unto themselves; by which, as an eloquent pulpit orator has said, “the intuition with which it works is a safer and surer guide than precepts, and better and surer success is reached than the most laborious planning could have gained.” Everybody who has read the physiological works of the day, is more or less familiar with what is called “unconscious cerebration,” a state in which the brain works unconsciously,—solving problems or answering questions at night, while the man is sleeping, which baffled all his powers in the daytime. Phenomena like this occur in the experience of accomplished and trained speakers.

A writer in “Harper's Magazine” speaks of a preacher unsurpassed by any living one in extempore power, alike of language, thought, and tone, who affirms that, sometimes, in his best hours, he loses all conscious hold upon

his mind and speech, and while perfectly sure that all is going on well in his attic, it seems to him that somebody else is talking up there; and he catches himself wondering who under the sun that fellow is who is driving on at such a rate. Examples of this unconscious action of the mind are seen in every calling. It is this instinct of skill, the result of years of practice, self-discipline, and observation, which enables the funambulist to travel without fear on a wire suspended over the dizzy chasm of Niagara; which enables the marksman to raise his rifle, and, apparently without aim, to bring down a pigeon on the wing; which enables the painter to give the most delicate touches to his picture while engaged in conversation; which gives to the pianist his almost miraculous touch, so that, as his fingers run swiftly over the keys, they seem to be instinct with thought and feeling oozing from their tips. This automatic action, it is evident, must be a great help to the orator, relieving him, as it does, of much care, anxiety, and toil, and carrying him oftentimes triumphantly through his work without solicitude or conscious effort. Like all other advantages, however, it has its compensations; and if a speaker be naturally indolent, there is danger lest, instead of laboriously preparing himself, he should rely upon this faculty altogether. The result of so doing will be, as seen in the melancholy case of those persons who are distinguished for the "gift of the gab," that he will speedily lose all true inspiration and force, and sink into a mere machine, like a barrel-organ, that plays over and over *ad nauseam* the same worn-out tones.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE TESTS OF ELOQUENCE.

IT has been justly said that for the triumphs of eloquence,—for the loftiest displays of the art,—there must be something more than an eloquent man; there must be a reinforcing of man from events, so as to give the double force of reason and destiny. For the explosions and eruptions, “there must be some crisis in affairs; there must be accumulations of heat somewhere, beds of ignited anthracite at the centre. And in cases where profound conviction has been wrought, the eloquent man is he who is no beautiful speaker, but who is inwardly drunk with a certain belief. It agitates and tears him, and perhaps almost bereaves him of the power of articulation. Then it rushes from him in short, abrupt screams, in torrents of meaning.” Hence Goethe has somewhere said that to write is an abuse of words; that the impression of a solitary reading replaces but sadly the vivid energy of spoken language; that it is by his *personality* that man acts upon man, while such impressions are at once the strongest and the purest. The immeasurable superiority of oratory spoken over oratory read, is known to all. When the contending forces are drawn out face to face, there is the excitement of a battle, and every blow which tells against the enemy is welcomed with the same huzzas that soldiers raise when a well-aimed shot

makes a chasm in the ranks of the enemy, or demolishes his defenses. The effect, under such circumstances, of an overwhelming attack or of a scathing retort arises as much from the mental condition of the hearers as from the vigor of the blows. "It is because the powder lights upon a heated surface that an explosion is produced." Again, the electric sympathy of numbers deepens the impression, even when no exciting question is up, and no party feeling is kindled. An audience is not a mere aggregate of the individuals that compose it. Their common sympathy intensifies the feeling which the speaker produces, as a jar in a battery is charged with the whole electricity of the battery. The speech which would be listened to calmly by ten or a dozen persons, will thrill and electrify a multitude, as a jest will set the tables in a roar, which, heard by one man, will scarcely provoke a smile. Another secret of the superiority of spoken oratory, is the delight which is felt in impromptu eloquence as a mere feat. The difficulty of pouring forth extempore beautiful or striking thought in apt and vivid language, especially for an hour or hours, is so great that only few can overcome it, and the multitude, who see something divine in such mysterious manifestations of power, are ready to exclaim, as in the days of Herod, "It is the voice of a god!" The readers of a debate are under no such spell. The words do not come to them burning from the lips of the speaker, but impress them precisely as would the same quantity of printed matter coolly written for the press. They read passages which are reported to have drawn forth "thunders of applause" without emotion, and sarcasms which provoked "loud laughter" without being cheated into a single smile. Besides this, the figure, the voice, the magnetism of the speaker, do much

to deepen the force and significance of his words. It is said that Erskine's looks spoke before his lips, and that his tones charmed even those who were too remote to catch his words. Demosthenes relied so much on action that he called it the first, second, and third requisite of an orator. Cicero declared that without it the greatest gifts are unavailing, while with it mediocrity can surpass genius itself. The power of the orator lies less in *what* he says than in *how* he says it. A provincial actor will deliver the "farewell" speech of Othello word by word with literal correctness, and you will be as unmoved as himself; the great actor speaks it, and you "read Shakspeare as by a flash of lightning." It is said that Macready never produced a greater effect than by the words, "Who said that?" Garrick used to say that he would give a hundred guineas if he could say "*Oh!*" as Whitefield did. When Mirabeau's friend complained that the Assembly would not listen to him, that fiery leader asked for his speech, and the next day roused the Assembly by uttering as his own the words they had refused to hear from another. "The words were the same: the fire that made them thrilling and electric were not his friend's, but his own."

There is another cause of the different impression which a speech produces when read from what it produced when heard; it lies in the very nature of the oratorical style. It has been justly said that that is good rhetoric for the hustings which is bad for a book. Fox, when told that a speech read well, said: "Then it must have been a bad speech." It is not to secure the "all hail, hereafter" that the orator aims, but at instant effect. The more exquisite his skill,—the more perfect his adaptation to his theme, his audience, and the occasion,—the more com-



pletely his speech is evolved *ex visceribus causae*,—the less likely will he be to captivate the general reader, especially when the lapse of time has worked a revolution in tastes, or obscured his allusions, or robbed the topics themselves of their interest. On the other hand, the more his discourse is adapted to excite universal interest, and to appeal to the sympathies of after ages,—the more it abounds in thoughts and suggestions of universal interest, and gems of expression which are likely to sparkle for all time,—the less exact will be the adaptation to the audience and the occasion. It was the very qualities in Demosthenes' speeches of which the modern reader is apt to complain, that made them so overwhelming in their effect upon his countrymen; and conversely, it was the very characteristics of Burke's philosophic harangues over which his hearers yawned, that will make them the delight of all posterity.

The orator who is haranguing a promiscuous assembly must not proceed as if he were speaking in the schools. His oratory must be governed, indeed, by an enlarged philosophy, but he must not formally philosophize. The structure of his argument should be reared on broad and massy foundations, but in appearance it should be self-poised and pensile. While he should reason logically, he should make no parade of logic; the skeleton of his argument should not force itself through the flesh. Except on rare occasions, when addressing a highly intellectual audience, he must repeat the same ideas in different words,—dwelling upon and reiterating his thoughts, till he is sure that he is understood and has made a deep impression. There is a sort of previous lubrication, such as the boa-constrictor applies to the goat or bullock he digests,

which is absolutely necessary to familiarize the popular mind with any truth, especially with one that is a startling or complex novelty. It becomes necessary, therefore, as a late writer says, to vary the modes of presenting it; putting it now directly before the eye, now obliquely; now in abstract form, now in the concrete; and he is the most skillful orator who can contrive the most cunning forms for appearing to say something new, when he is really but echoing himself,—who can break up massy chords into running variations, and mask, by slight differences in the manner, a virtual identity in the substance.

It was well said by Demosthenes that the power of oratory is as much in the ear as in the tongue. Fox advised Romilly, in an important trial, not to be afraid, in summing up the evidence, of repeating material observations, as “it was better that some of the audience should observe it, than that any should not understand.” Erskine deemed it one of Fox’s highest merits that he passed and repassed the same topics “in the most unforeseen and fascinating review.” He knew, adds Lord Stanhope, that, by the multitude, one argument stated in five different forms, is, in general, held equal to five different arguments. Both Pitt and Brougham justify the practice of amplification, the latter declaring that the orator often feels that he could add strength to his composition by compression, but his hearers would then be unable to keep pace with him, and he is compelled to sacrifice conciseness to clearness. De Quincey, in his observations upon Greek literature, remarks that even an orator like Lord Bacon (as described by Ben Jonson) was too weighty, too massy with the bullion of original thought, ever to have realized the idea of a great popular orator,—one who

“wields at will a fierce democracy,” and ploughs up the great deeps of public sentiment or party strife, or national animosities, like a levanter or a monsoon. “If such an orator,” says De Quincey, “had labored with no other defect, had he the gift of *tautology*? Could he say the same thing three times over in direct sequence? for, without this talent of iteration,—of repeating the same thought in diversified forms,—a man may utter good heads of an oration, but not an oration.”

It is true the Greek orators appear to have adopted a different practice from the moderns in this respect; but there is strong reason to believe that their harangues have not come down to us as they were delivered,—that they condensed them when they committed them to writing. It was the opinion of Burke that not even an Athenian audience could have followed the orations of Demosthenes, if he had uttered them in the concentrated form in which they have come down to us; and Cicero objects to the Greeks that they sometimes carried brevity to the point of obscurity. But the expansion and repetition, which were a merit at the moment of delivery, become glaring defects when a speech is printed. “Bottom! thou art translated!” it has been justly said, might be placed as a motto under most collections of printed speeches. Pinkney recognized this truth when he began to write out his great speech in the Nereide case, and, disappointed in the effect when he saw it on paper, threw down his pen. In reading the sermons of George Whitefield we are puzzled to account for the prodigious effects they produced; but we forget that the sentiments which, as seen on the quiet page, seem so tame and commonplace, were full of life, beauty, and power, when illus-

trated by his musical intonation, the play of his features, and his apt gestures. As printed sermons they are "stale, flat, and unprofitable"; but when rushing from the burning lips of the preacher, they wrought miracles, warmed the fastidious Hume and the haughty Bolingbroke into enthusiasm, and swept before them such towers of Sadduceeism as Franklin and Lord Chesterfield.

One of the most eloquent preachers of the day was the late Dr. Guthrie, of Edinburgh; yet the reader of his sermons hardly discovers in them adequate proofs of this fact. Much of his charm lay in his illustrations, which were apt and striking as they came from his lips, but lose much of their impressiveness on paper. In listening to his vivid appeals, a metaphor dazzled you and was gone; in his printed page, you examine it coolly and carefully; it is pinned down for you like a butterfly on a card, and you can critically finger it and pick holes in it. Hence, a reviewer of his published sermons, who would probably have been captivated by their delivery, complains that there is in them a great deal of illustration, and very little to illustrate; a very small army, but a most valorous noise of drums. The illustration, he says, "bears the same relation to the idea illustrated that the lion depicted on the outside of the menagerie,—a man beneath his royal foot, a horse flying afar, as with uplifted head and dishevelled mane he is engaged in sending forth his tremendous roar, which makes every creature of the wilderness quake with fear,—bears to the ignoble and sleepy brute, which, when you enter, you find huddled down in a corner of his cage, no more like the king of beasts outside, which is supposed to be his counterfeit presentment, 'than I to Hercules.'" So with many political speeches

whose reported effects seem so incredible; when they are printed, we have, it is true, "the self-same words, but not the self-same tune." The vehement gesture, the thundering voice, the flashing eye, the curling lip, all "those brave sublunary things that made his raptures clear,"—above all, the sympathy and applause of his hearers, which doubled the weight and force of his utterances,—are wanting. In reading them at our leisure, pausing at every line, and reconsidering every argument, we forget that the hearers were hurried from point to point too rapidly to detect the fallacies by which they were cheated; that they had no time to disentangle sophisms, or to notice contradictions or inaccuracies of reasoning or expression. We forget that the sentence which seems so flat and unimpressive was made emphatic by the ringing pronunciation; that the sarcasm which seems so pointless took all its venom from the contemptuous smile that accompanied it; that the figure which seems so tawdry owed its vividness to the glance and the gesture; that the fallacy which looks so shallow derived its plausibility from the air of candor with which it was uttered.

Again, in reading a speech in cold blood in the closet, we make a use of it for which it was not designed. We seek instruction or amusement, while the orator never intended to instruct or amuse. He sought only to persuade. Wit, logic, philosophy,—every merit of thought or style which did not contribute to the end,—he sternly rejected. If repetition, exaggeration, sesquipedalian words, or bombast even, subserved his purpose, he employed it. As Selden says, "that rhetoric is best which is most seasonable and most catching." The blunt old English commander who addressed his men at Cadiz, was a true orator,

if not a polished speaker: "What a shame will it be, you Englishmen, that feed upon good beef and beer, to let those rascally Spaniards beat you, that *eat nothing but oranges and lemons!*" O'Connell has been ridiculed for his blarney; but did not *he*, as well as his critics, know that he was talking nonsense when he harangued upon "hereditary bondsmen" and "the finest peasantry in Europe"? Yet, while pouring out that nonsense, he was one of the mightiest, because one of the most successful, orators that ever roused men to act. Nothing can be more tawdry than a large part of the speech of Sheridan on the trial of Warren Hastings; but we know that it was a great speech, not because Burke has told us so, but from the effects it produced. Windham, himself an orator, declared twenty years afterward that it was the greatest speech within the memory of man; and the House of Commons confessed its power by adjourning on the ground that its members were too much excited to judge the case fairly. On the other hand, Sir James Mackintosh's "luminous and philosophical" disquisition on the Reform Bill we know was a failure,—and why? Because it was spoken to empty benches. And why was it spoken to empty benches? Because he spoke to the head, and not to the heart,—because he reasoned when he should have roused,—because, in fine, his talents were solid and substantial, not those which enable a speaker to produce with rapidity a series of striking but transitory impressions, and to excite the minds of five hundred men at midnight, without saying anything that any one of them will be able to remember in the morning.

Hazlitt complains in one of his essays that the most dashing orator he ever heard, was the flattest writer he

ever read. "In speaking, he was like a volcano vomiting out *lava*; in writing, he was like a volcano burnt out. Nothing but the dry cinders, the hard shell, remained. The tongues of flame with which, in haranguing a mixed assembly, he used to illuminate his subject, and almost scorched up the panting air, do not appear painted on the margin of his works." But ought this to have excited Hazlitt's surprise? Is it by profound learning and solid wisdom, by accuracy, depth, and comprehensive views, that men become masters of assemblies? A writer cannot be too profound, but a speaker may; and hence Archbishop Whately, in his "Rhetoric," seriously doubts whether a first-rate man can be a first-rate orator. The very habits of investigation, of accuracy, of thoroughness, of fastidiousness in the use of terms, which would qualify him for science and literary composition, would prove fatal to his harangue. Of the political orator, this is especially true. The larger his views, the more abundant his stores of knowledge, the more difficult will it often be to adapt himself to the nimble movements of that guerrilla warfare in which debaters chiefly shine. Though his troops may be far more numerous than those of another combatant, and more heavily armed, yet because he is too fastidious,—because he must pause to effect the best disposition of his battalions,—because his front and his rear must alike be cared for, before he will move,—he may be eclipsed by a person of far inferior powers, who yet can brilliantly manœuvre his more manageable forces on a more limited field. Superior activity and command of weapons may often compensate for inferiority in strength. The tactics of Napoleon, so irresistible in the field, are not less victorious in the senate. We are told that at an interview which took

place after the battle of Austerlitz between Savary, his ambassador, and the Emperor of Russia, Alexander paid a just tribute to the marvellous genius of his conqueror, but contended that the French army was double his own. "Your Majesty is misinformed," replied Savary; "our force was inferior to yours by at least twenty-five thousand men. But we manœuvred much; and the same division combated at many different points." So is it oftentimes in debate.

It is an old but just remark that eloquence is in the audience, not in the speaker. It is a harmony struck out of their mental chords by a master's hand. To play skillfully on this instrument he must be sincere. He must feel that he has gone to the *bottom* of his theme. But this is precisely what the deep thinker, trained to the most scrupulous accuracy of investigation,—who sees all the sides of a question, and is fully alive to its difficulties,—cannot do. *He* cannot be fluent upon it, for in *him* fluency would be flippancy. Especially will this be the case, if the subject be a new one which he has never considered, or if some new point has come up suddenly in the course of a debate. Though he may take a juster view of it, on the spur of the moment, than a shallow thinker would, he cannot fail to see and feel how impossible it must be to do full justice to a subject demanding reflection and investigation; and, therefore, however great his wisdom, he will be unable to speak with the fluency, the easy, unembarrassed confidence of another who never looks below the surface of things, and gets his best views at the first glance.\* And yet it is this fluent

\* Hence, as Hazlitt well remarks, "the distinction between eloquence and wisdom, between ingenuity and common sense. A man may be dexterous and able in explaining the grounds of his opinions, and yet may be a mere sophist, because he only sees one half of a subject. Another may feel the whole weight of a question, nothing relating to it may be lost upon him, and yet he may be



utterance, with graceful action and elegant diction,—qualities that speak to the ear, to the eye, and not simply to the mind,—that most popular assemblies want. An English reviewer justly says that true political science is not merely needless in popular assemblies, it is positively distasteful, and those who are masters of it can rarely obtain it a hearing. The gorgeous imagery and lofty eloquence of Burke could not atone for the repulsiveness of his legislative wisdom, and few men spoke to thinner benches. Lord Chesterfield tells us that he entered the House of Commons with awe, but soon discovered that, of the five hundred and sixty members, not over thirty could understand reason. These thirty required plain sense in harmonious periods; the rest were a mob who were to be moved only by an appeal to their passions, their seeming interests, and their senses. Graceful utterance and action pleased their eyes, elegant diction tickled their ears, but they could neither penetrate below the surface, nor follow those who did.

It may be thought that the House of Commons of today is a more intelligent body, and that, consequently, its requirements are higher. Not such is the judgment of some of the closest observers. "I find truisms," Mr. Milner Gibson once observed to a friend, "the best things for the House of Commons." "A learned man in that body," says Sir Henry L. Bulwer, who takes an extremely cynical view of the matter, "is more likely to be wrong than any other. He fancies himself amid an assembly of meditative and

able to give no account of the manner in which it affects him, or to drag his reasons from their silent lurking-places. This last will be a wise man, though neither a logician nor a rhetorician. Goldsmith was a fool to Dr. Johnson in argument; that is, in assigning the specific grounds of his opinion; Dr. Johnson was a fool to Goldsmith in the fine tact, the airy, intuitive faculty with which he skimmed the surfaces of things, and unconsciously formed his opinions."

philosophic statesmen; he calls up all his deepest thoughts and most refined speculations; he is anxious to astonish by the profundity and extent of his views, the novelty and sublimity of his conceptions; as he commences, the listeners are convinced he is a bore, and before he concludes, he is satisfied that they are blockheads. . . . The House of Commons consists of a mob of gentlemen, the greater part of whom are neither without talent nor information. But a mob of well-informed gentlemen is still a mob, requiring to be amused rather than instructed, and only touched by those reasons and expressions, which, clear to the dullest as to the quickest intellect, vibrate through an assembly as if it had but one ear and one mind." "It would be as idle," says Macaulay, "in an orator to waste meditation and long research on his speeches, as it would be in the manager of a theatre to adorn all the crowd of courtiers and ladies who cross over the stage in a procession with real pearls and diamonds." No man in his day had taken a more exact account of the same House than Sir Robert Peel; yet he tells us that arguments, to have weight with the representatives of the nation, must be "such as are adapted to people who know very little of the matter, care not much about it, half of whom have dined or are going to dine, and are forcibly struck only by that which they can instantly comprehend without much trouble."

As the object of public speaking in most cases is persuasion, it is natural to regard success as the highest test of skill. "A great speech," O'Connell used to say, in speaking of forensic discourses, "is a very fine thing; but, after all, the verdict is THE thing." There have been cases, no doubt, of triumph over adverse prejudices, where verdicts

have been wrung from reluctant juries, or votes from hostile assemblies, under circumstances so unfavorable, that no higher proof could be afforded of the orator's ability and skill. Of all the testimonies to Cicero's oratorical power, the most convincing is the fact we have already mentioned, that he made Cæsar acquit the man he had resolved to condemn. It is said that the gay and gallant figure of Murat, when in the Russian campaign he rushed among the bristling lances of the enemy, as if to grasp the bloody hand of Death, and lead him down the dance, drew from the Cossacks loud cries of admiration. So when O'Connell, against fearful odds, dashed into the opposing ranks in the House of Commons, even Peel and Disraeli sometimes dropped their pencils and gazed in fascinated admiration at the orator, with his wondrous attitudes, and still more wondrous words and tones. On the other hand, there have been cases where the divinest eloquence, enforcing unwelcome truths, has been powerless against deep-rooted convictions and foregone conclusions, especially when fortified by self-interest and party or sectarian prejudice. As in war, it is not always the general who puts forth the highest strategical and tactical skill that is rewarded with victory in a battle or a campaign, because, though his plans may be perfect, they may still be defeated by any one of a hundred contingencies over which he has no control, and which no human sagacity could have foreseen,—so an orator may be baffled by prejudices against which the most cogent argument and the most persuasive appeals may be directed in vain.

“A jest's prosperity,” says Shakspeare, “lies in the ear of him that hears it,” and the same may be said of

the success of a speech. The history of legislation in this country and England shows that there are times of violent party strife, when the most convincing oratory can avail nothing against the inexorable decrees of party and "the dead eloquence of votes." The burning appeals of Chatham did not prevent Great Britain from taxing and waging war upon her colonies; the great speech of his son upon the Slave-Trade, the most powerful oratorical effort of his life, did not win a majority of votes in the House of Commons against that iniquitous traffic; the almost superhuman eloquence with which Burke, Sheridan, and Fox shook Westminster Hall did not prevent Warren Hastings from going "unwhipt of justice"; nor did the Prince of Orators succeed, until after many impassioned and apparently fruitless appeals, in rousing his countrymen to a sense of their danger from Philip of Macedon. O'Connell never made a finer exhibition of his parliamentary powers than when, against fearful odds, and what he called "the beastly bellowings" of the House of Commons, he resisted the "Coercion Bill," introduced by Stanley. Erskine, in his advocacy of the people's rights before juries, was more successful than Curran; but in none of his addresses was he more eloquent than the brave Irishman, when, at midnight, in his defense of Bond, he rebuked the volunteers who clashed their arms as in defiance of his invectives, exclaiming, "You may assassinate me, but you shall not intimidate me"; nor in any of the fearful flashes of scorn with which Erskine scathed the band of informers, is there to be found a figure more striking than that of Curran, when he declaimed against the spies brought up after the rebellion from prisons, "those catacombs of living death, where the wretch that

is buried a man lies till his heart has time to fester and dissolve, and is then dug up an informer." Champions of prisoners in the most remarkable state trials of their respective countries, they both, as Mr. Townsend has said,\* struggled night after night, with all the resistless strength of eloquence; the one radiant of triumph and assured of victory, the other pale and steadfast in the energy of despair, certain of the result, but determined that all the decent rites of defense should be observed. In both cases, the populace, enthusiastic in their admiration, took the horses from their carriages, and by a voluntary degradation drew the orators to their homes.

It is an interesting question discussed by Archbishop Whately, why so few persons have won high reputation as orators compared with the number of those who have attained eminence in other pursuits. His conclusion is, that vanity,—the love of admiration,—which is so common in men of every calling, and which, though it may impede, does not prevent success, in poetry, politics, war, etc., operates as an absolute hindrance in oratory. The orator attains his ends the less he is regarded as an orator. A *general* reputation for eloquence may be advantageous; but on each *individual* occasion when he speaks, the more his hearers think of his eloquence, the less will they think of the strength of his cause. If he can make his hearers believe that he is not only a stranger to all unfair artifice, but even destitute of all persuasive skill whatever, he will persuade them the more effectually; and if there ever could be an absolutely perfect orator, *no one would (at the time, at least) discover that he was so.* Hence Shakspeare makes Mark Antony begin his famous speech over

\* "Lives of the Lord Chancellors."

the dead body of Cæsar by declaring, "I am no orator, as Brutus is"; and hence the "Quarterly Review" finds fault with the celebrated scene, Jeanie's interview with Queen Caroline, in "The Heart of Mid-Lothian." The Queen, in reply to Jeanie's rhetorical speech, is represented as saying, "This *is* eloquence." Had it *been* eloquence, says the reviewer, it must necessarily have been unperceived by the Queen. "If there is any art of which *celare artem* is the basis, it is this. The instant it peeps out, it defeats its own object by diverting our attention from the subject to the speaker, and that with a suspicion of his sophistry equal to our admiration of his ingenuity. A man who, in answer to an earnest address to the feelings of his hearer, is told, 'You have spoken eloquently,' feels that he has failed. Effie, when she entreats Sharpitlaw to allow her to see her sister, *is* eloquent; and his answer accordingly betrays perfect unconsciousness that she has been so. 'You shall see your sister,' he began, 'if you'll tell me,'—then, interrupting himself, he added, in a more hurried tone, 'No, you shall see your sister, whether you tell me or no.'" In listening to eloquence of the highest order, we are so occupied with the thoughts presented to us, and hurried so impetuously toward the end proposed, that we no more regard the medium by which we are affected, than a starving man the dish in which food is offered to him, or than the recipient of startling news regards the looks and dress of the messenger. Fenelon, in his "Dialogues of the Dead," represents Demosthenes as saying to Cicero, "Thou madest people say, 'How well he speaks!'" but I made them say, 'Let us march against Philip!'" Jefferson tells us that when Patrick Henry was making his great speeches, he

always swept his hearers along with him, and it was not till they had left the court-room or the legislative hall, that they found themselves asking, "What did he say?"

The same principle is illustrated by an anecdote told of Chief Justice Parsons, of Massachusetts. When he was practicing at the bar, a farmer who had often heard him speak, was asked by a stranger what sort of a pleader he was. "Oh, he is a great lawyer," was the reply; "he is an excellent counsellor; but he is a very poor pleader." "But does he not win most of his causes?" "Yes; but that's because he knows the law, and can argue well; but he is *no orator*." We were once talking with an intelligent old gentleman in Massachusetts, a hard-headed bank president, who had served as foreman of a jury in a law-case, about the ability of Rufus Choate. "Mr. Choate," said he, "was one of the counsel in the case, and, knowing his skill in making white appear black, and black white, I made up my mind at the outset that he should not fool *me*. He tried all his arts, but it was of no use; I just decided according to the law and evidence." "Of course, you gave your verdict against Mr. Choate's client." "Why, no; we gave a verdict for his client; but then we couldn't help it; *he had the law and the evidence on his side*." It had never once occurred to the good man that he had been under a spell woven by one who was a master of his art. Mr. Parsons and Mr. Choate were both distinguished as verdict-getters. Unlike Parsons, many orators are tempted to sacrifice the substance to the shadow, by aiming at the admiration of their hearers, rather than at their conviction; while, on the other hand, some, like him, may have been really persuasive speakers, though they may not have ranked high in men's opinion,

and may not have been known to possess that art of which they gave proof by skillful concealment of it.

One of the reasons why the very name of rhetoric has fallen into disrepute in this age, is that the greatest artists strive to conceal their perfection in it; they endeavor to make their statements in such a way that the effect may seem to be produced by that which is stated and not by the manner in which it is stated. It was said of Sir James Scarlett, who, though an admirable speaker, indulged in no great feats of oratory, that his triumphs at the bar were so easy and natural that they did not seem triumphs at all. The Duke of Wellington declared that when he addressed a jury, there were thirteen jurymen. A countryman who had been serving day after day on a jury which Mr. Scarlett had addressed, once paid him the highest compliment when he was undervaluing his qualifications. Being asked what he thought of the leading counsel,—“Well,” was the reply, “that lawyer Brougham be a wonderful man; he can talk, he can; but I don’t think nowt of Lawyer Scarlett.” “Indeed!” exclaimed the querist, “you surprise me! Why, you have been giving him all the verdicts.” “Oh, there’s nothing in that,” said the juror; “he be so lucky, you see, he be always on the right side.” This reminds one of Partridge, in Fielding’s “Tom Jones.” “He the best player!” exclaimed Partridge after seeing Garrick in Hamlet; “why, I could act as well as he myself. I am sure if I had seen a ghost, I should have looked in the same manner, and done just as he did. The King for my money; he speaks all his words distinctly, half as loud again as the others; anybody may see he is an actor.”

It will be seen from all this, also, that eloquence is a



relative term. It is, as Dr. Campbell has properly defined it, "the art by which a discourse is adapted to its end"; and therefore it is impossible to say of any discourse, abstractly considered, whether it is or is not eloquent, any more than we can pronounce upon the wholesomeness of a medicine without knowing for whom it is intended. While there are certain qualities which all discourses should have in common, yet there are others which must vary with the varying capacities, degrees of intelligence, tastes, and affections of those who are addressed. The style of oratory that is fitted to kindle the enthusiasm of Frenchmen, would often provoke only the merriment of Englishmen. The English are grave, matter-of-factish, sententious, and argumentative; the French ardent, discursive, and brilliant. The French speaker abounds in facial expression and gesticulation; the English stands almost motionless, clenching the desk with his hands, or burying them in his breeches pockets. Again, a speech addressed to an audience of scholars, exacts very different qualities from one addressed to the common people. It was said of one of John Foster's profound discourses when published, that "it should have been addressed to an audience created for the purpose." The orator who throws a congregation of illiterate enthusiasts into tears, would raise affections of a very different kind, should he attempt to proselyte an American Senate; and again, the finest speaker that ever swayed a parliamentary assembly, might try in vain to rouse or allay the passions of an uneducated mob.

Indeed, it is a well-known fact that some of the most persuasive parliamentary orators have failed when out of their proper element, floundering like a fish on dry

land. If we may believe Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield), the greatest member of Parliament that ever lived was Sir Robert Peel; "he played on the House of Commons as on an old fiddle"; and yet, according to the same authority, "he could not address a public meeting, or make an after-dinner speech, without being ill at ease, and generally saying something stilted or even a little ridiculous." Mr. Cobden says of Lord John Russell: "On the boards of the House of Commons, Johnny is one of the most subtle and dangerous of opponents; take him off those boards, and I care nothing for him." On the other hand, O'Connell was equally at home in the forum, at the hustings, or in the House of Commons. Before he entered Parliament he was pronounced a mere "mob orator," and it was predicted by his enemies that in that body he was sure to "find his level." In 1830 he was elected to the House of Commons, and in 1831 he was listened to as the foremost orator in that assembly. It was said of Murray (Lord Mansfield), "that he refined too much, and could wrangle too little for a popular assembly," and hence he succeeded better in the House of Lords than in the House of Commons. The true orator will always study the character of his audience, and whether he is copious and flowing, or concise and pointed,—whether he arms himself with the thunders and lightnings of eloquence, or speaks "with bated breath and whispering humbleness" in the mild tones of insinuation or persuasion,—he will at all times accommodate himself to his situation, becoming

"Orpheus in silvis, inter delphinas Arion,"

and, if necessary, will, like Sylla, convert even the trees of the Academy into martial engines.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PERSONALITIES IN DEBATE.

A FOREIGN correspondent of an American journal, who visited the British Parliament a few years ago, strikingly contrasts the courtesy of political opponents in that body with the personalities which are so common in American legislatures. He says that the moment a member rises to address the House of Commons, he seems possessed by the most refined and gentlemanly consideration for others. In speaking of antagonists he carefully guards against the slightest imputation of dishonorable motives; or if, in the heat of debate, a word of oblique significance slips from his tongue, he hastens to withdraw it, and to express his regret; nay, even in his sarcasms and home-thrusts, he is careful to mention something to the credit of the very foeman he is about to scathe. Such a thing as hurling abusive epithets, giving the lie, and, above all, threatening personal violence,—practices so common as scarcely to create a sensation in our American legislatures,—would not be tolerated for a moment. When the Earl of Derby, in an attack on Lord John Russell, likened him to “Bottom the weaver,” and described his policy by “the two homely words, meddle and muddle,” it was felt that he went to the very verge of propriety. Great as was the ascendancy of Lord Palmerston in that body, it never enabled him to lord it over his

fellow-Commoners so far as to be uncivil to the least popular members of the House. When, on one occasion, he trespassed so far as to say impatiently of the not-over-popular Joseph Hume, "If the honorable gentleman's understanding is obtuse, it is not my fault," he was instantly brought to his senses by the reproachful murmurs of the House, and was reminded that even Lord Palmerston must respect the fine code of legislative chivalry established there.

What American, unless a politician, will not feel humiliated by the contrast between this picture and the scenes often witnessed in Congress and our State legislatures? How often are epithets applied to each other, by our Senators and Representatives, which a fishwoman in Billingsgate might delight to add to her already sparkling vocabulary, but which

"A beggar in his drink  
Would not bestow upon his callet."

What must be a foreigner's impression, if, on visiting Congress, he should hear an altercation in which the vocabulary was exhausted by members for foul epithets to fling at each other, and see this followed,—as we have seen it,—by one of the pugilists rushing with turned-up sleeves into the arena before the Speaker, and shaking his clenched fist at his antagonist? Not always, however, did the British Senate transfuse debate with those graceful amenities which now do it honor, and which lift its discussions so far above the hot and scurrilous word-brawls which politicians so often substitute for facts and logic. The criminative fury with which Pulteney attacked Walpole, and Walpole attacked Pulteney, is well known to the readers of British history. Nearly all of Lord Chat-

ham's most telling replies were bitter personalities, such as that to Walpole, when the latter twitted him of his youth, and the fierce reply to Lord Holland, when, looking him full in the face, he said: "There are some (persons) upon whose faces the hand of Heaven has so *stamped* the mark of wickedness, that it were impiety not to give it credit." Not less coarse were the invectives of Burke, which sometimes degenerated into positive scurrility. The wisest man of his age, and possessing a profoundly philosophic intellect, he had at the same time so vehement a temperament, so acute a sensibility, and so excitable an imagination,—his affections were so warm, and his hatred of wrong so prompt and intense, even to morbidness,—that, when his passions were once roused, they raged with a blind fury which mocked at all control. Hence, though naturally generous and forgiving, he pursued an antagonist as he would a criminal, and, while he thought like a philosopher, acted like a heated partisan. Who has forgotten his picture of Lord North: "The noble Lord who spoke last, after extending his right leg a full yard before his left, rolling his flaming eyes, and moving his ponderous frame, has at length opened his mouth."

Again, who has forgotten the famous quarrel between Fox and Burke, or the Duke of Grafton's taunt at Thurlow's mean extraction, which drew down upon the assailant such a crushing reply; or who is not familiar with Grattan's retort upon Flood, the most artistic and overwhelming invective that has disfigured parliamentary debates? Flood had taunted him with aping the style of Lord Chatham, and denounced him as "a mendicant patriot, subsisting upon the public accounts,—who, bought by his country for a sum of money, then sold his country for prompt pay-

ment." Grattan begins by supposing an imaginary character, whom he invests with all the faults of his opponent, and in whom he traces his history. His evident intention is to keep up the transparent mask to the end of the speech, and then annihilate his rival by a word,—just as Brougham, forty years later, directed a memorable attack upon Canning. But, in the middle of the speech, the orator can restrain his pent-up indignation no longer; the direct hostility which inspires the assault is too powerful to allow the flimsy pretext of an imaginary character, and Grattan bursts into one of those fiery onsets which no man ever led with more terrible effect: "The merchant may say to you, —the constitutionalist may say to you,—the American may say to you,—and I, *I* now say, and say to your beard, sir,—*you are not an honest man!*" "Can you believe," wrote General Burgoyne to Charles Fox, that "the House heard this discussion for two hours without interfering? On the contrary, every one seemed to rejoice as his favorite gladiator gave or parried a stroke." Even so late as 1840–41, we find Macaulay, in his Diary, complaining of the bitter personalities in the House of Commons. Speaking of the debate on Stanley's Irish Registration Bill, he says: "I have never seen such unseemly demeanor, or heard such scurrilous language, in Parliament. . . . Lord Maidstone was so ill-mannered that I hope he was drunk. . . . O'Connell was so rudely interrupted that he used the expression 'beastly bellowings.' Then rose such an uproar as no O. P. mob at Covent Garden Theatre, no crowd of Chartists in front of a hustings, ever equaled. Men stood up on both sides, shook their fists, and bawled at the top of their voices. . . . O'Connell raged like a mad bull. . . . At last the tumult ended from absolute physical weariness."

The name of Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield) is associated with some of the most stinging personalities ever uttered in the British Legislature. One of his Hebrew countrymen declares that "he cannot shine without offensiveness, His passages of arms are not worth commemorating, unless he draws blood." A greater master of cool, polished, searching irony, ridicule, and invective, probably never stood within the walls of St. Stephen. It has been truly said of him, that when he is prepared, not a blow misses; not a sarcasm is impeded by a weakening phrase. His peculiar tones, with his provoking frigidity of manner, and affected contempt for his foe, add much to the effect of his hits. In the Maynooth debate of 1845, he made an attack upon Sir Robert Peel, in which he said that "with him great measures were always rested on small precedents, that he always traced the steam-engine back to the tea-kettle; that in fact all his precedents were tea-kettle precedents." Again, in a speech made in the House of Commons in 1846, Disraeli advised Peel to stick to quotation, because he never quoted any passage that had not previously received the meed of parliamentary "approbation"; compared him to the Turkish admiral who steered the fleet confided to him straight into the enemy's port; termed the Treasury Bench "political pedlars that bought their party in the cheapest market and sold us in the dearest"; and compared the conversion of the Peelites to that of the Saxons by Charlemagne, "who, according to the chronicle, were converted in battalions, and baptized in platoons." Peel was the chief target of Disraeli's sarcasms, and so dull and spiritless, comparatively, were his speeches after Peel's death, that Sheil compared him to a dissecting surgeon or anatomist without a corpse. Mr. Roebuck, whose

name Disraeli associated with "Sadler's Wells sarcasms" and "melodramatic malignity," was another of his victims. One of his happiest hits was in a speech made a few years ago at Manchester, when he said: "As I sat opposite the Treasury Bench, the Ministers reminded me of those marine landscapes not very unusual on the coast of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes. Not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest. But the situation is still dangerous. There are occasional earthquakes, and ever and anon the dark rumbling of the sea."

The example of Lord John Russell is well worthy of imitation by debaters. There was never, it is said, the slightest acrimony in his personal allusions. His triumphs, won easily by tact and intellectual keenness, unaided by passion, contrasted strikingly with "the costly victories of debaters like Lord Stanley, Disraeli, or Roebuck." What could be happier than his reply to Sir Francis Burdett, who had accused him of indulging in "the cant of patriotism,"—that "there was also such a thing as the recant of patriotism"? This mildness of tone, this well-bred, pungent raillery, which is now so generally characteristic of the English Parliament, has often proved a more effective weapon of debate than the most brilliant eloquence or the sharpest wit. "It draws a magic circle around the speaker, which only similar weapons can penetrate."

The reply made many years ago by Mr. Trimble, of Ohio, to a personal attack made on him by the haughty and fierce George McDuffie, of South Carolina, is a happy illustration of the way in which personalities, when very exasperating, may sometimes, without a great breach of decorum, be successfully repelled. Mr. McDuffie, then a



member of the House of Representatives, in a speech upon that floor, made a cunning and indirect assault upon Mr. Trimble, then comparatively obscure, and expectation was on tiptoe to see what course the latter would adopt. Everybody who heard Mr. McD. was well aware that his remarks were intended to have a personal application; but so carefully were they guarded by skillful phraseology that to resent them would seem like fitting to one's back a coat not designed for his wearing. The next day, however, Trimble replied in a speech of precisely the same character. Covertly, and with wonderful ingenuity, he attacked Mr. McDuffie in the same style, making no application to himself of the speech to which he was replying, — thus throwing upon his opponent all the responsibility of a quarrel. When Mr. Trimble had sat down, Mr. McDuffie arose, and, with looks and tones of vehement defiance, demanded a direct answer to the question whether the member from Ohio meant to be personal toward himself in the remarks just submitted to the House. Calmly, imperturbably, the member from Ohio arose, and thus addressed the Speaker: "The member from South Carolina *demand*s of me an answer to his question. I give it to him in a question to himself. Did *he* mean to be personal toward *me*, in his remarks of yesterday? If he did, then I did in mine of to-day. If he did not, I did not. He has my answer. If the gentleman from South Carolina meant nothing personal toward myself in the remarks he yesterday submitted to the House, then I did not mean personally to reflect upon him, or may I never see the smile of God! If the member from South Carolina meant aught personal with regard to me, then I meant to be just *as* personal toward him, or may the lightnings

of heaven blast me where I stand!" Mr. McDuffie never replied. Who "took most by his motion," the reader can decide.

It has always appeared strange to us that sagacious, thoughtful men should, in a deliberative assembly, where a majority of wills is to be obtained, so entirely lose sight of their interests as to be discourteous to their associates. No doubt there is something exciting in this species of intellectual gladiatorship, when private animosity as well as political rivalry sharpens men's differences, and the combatants, in fierce personal grapples, shorten their swords for a death-blow. The parliamentary duello, when giants engage, tends to bring out in their perfection all the qualities of what is then most emphatically "the wrestling style." Unquestionably, the *sæva indignatio* of an enraged man has prompted many a burst of eloquence of which his intellectual power has been supposed to be the source. "If I wish to compose, or write, or pray, and preach well," Luther used to say, "I must be angry [*zornig*]. Then all the blood in my veins is stirred, my understanding is sharpened, and all dismal thoughts and temptations are dissipated." Doubtless by "anger" the great Reformer meant what we call indignation, and, where it is of a lofty moral character, there is nothing which gives a greater projectile force or a more permanent effect to human thought. Thackeray's literary faculty was fully equal to Swift's, but he produced a far feebler impression because he was devoid of the stern indignation,—the strong capacity for hatred,—which made the Dean the most terrible of satirists. "Junius" owed half his power to his fiery rage. Take from certain critical journals their ill-temper and impudence, and they would lose half of

their brilliancy. Persons who recollected Mirabeau used to say that those who had not seen him speaking under the influence of anger, had not seen him; that it was in his rages that he was most superb. A mighty anger gives prodigious force to a speech or book; but for temporary purposes, mere hatred of the lowest sort,—pure *spite*,—is a most potent literary ingredient. An exceedingly small amount of intellectual power is sufficient to produce a very creditable effect, if it be fired by the gunpowder of a little anger. A secret consciousness of all this has, no doubt, led many a speaker to open the flood-gates of his wrath; still, the true orator will always be ready to sacrifice himself, and his reputation for eloquence, to gain his end; and he should, therefore, never forget that *to conciliate* is one of the chief arts and ends of debate.

The authority of intellect is hard enough to maintain, even with the utmost winningness of manner and the blandishments of rhetoric. Unlike personal majesty, or the soul-subduing fascination of beauty, which are palpable to the eye, it is an authority founded on *opinion*,—the opinion of associates; it is an ideal supremacy, which men readily deny when they choose, and always acknowledge with reluctance. A haughty, supercilious speaker on a legislative floor, who constantly assumes an air and an attitude of menace or defiance, and who vents on his opponents a deluge of angry invectives, is a positive injury to his constituents. Real intellectual blows, logical hard-hitting, the stern cut-and-thrust of mind, none will object to; but the effect of these on a high-minded opponent is very different from that of scorn or ridicule. So is the effect of playful wit or humor, as when Sir John Doyle,

after a speech in the Irish Parliament by Dr. Duigenan, a very *dark-featured* man, against the Catholic claims, extinguished its effect by the Horatian line, "*Hic niger est, hunc tu Romane caveto,*" which convulsed the House,—or, when Lord North, in reply to a fiery declaimer, who, after calling for his head, denounced him for sleeping, complained how cruel it was to be denied a solace which other criminals so often enjoyed,—that of having a night's rest before execution; or when, in reply to a dull, tedious speaker, who made a similar charge, he declared that it was unjust in the gentleman to blame him for taking the remedy which he himself had been so considerate as to administer. How happy his answer to an opponent who spoke of him as "that *thing* called a Minister!" "To be sure," he said, patting his portly sides, "I am 'a thing'; when, therefore, the gentleman called me 'a thing,' he said what was true, and I could not be angry with him. But when he added, 'that thing called a Minister,' he called me that thing which of all others he himself most wished to be, and therefore I took it as a compliment." Such good humor and imperturbability can never be conquered. For years Lord North carried on the contest, almost single-handed, against Fox, Burke, Barré, Dunning, and sometimes even Pitt, with the same genial spirit and jocularly, which nothing but a scandalous false quantity by Burke could lessen or disturb, and, when finally driven from office by a resistless combination of misfortunes and foes, he retired with the politest of bows and the blandest of smiles.

It must be admitted, again, that occasions do sometimes occur in debate when plain, blunt words,—“words stript of their shirts,” as an old poet calls them,—may, nay must,

be used; and we must not confound the just though severe language of honest indignation, provoked by villainy or meanness, with that of him who is always ready to

"Unpack his heart in words,  
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,  
A scullion."

There is a wide difference between the vituperation of a porter and that of a poet. The one recoils from the object of assault, and impinges upon the assailant; the other leaves a scar that can never be obliterated. The one, as Christopher North says, is "like mud thrown by a brutal boor on the gateway of some glorious edifice"; the other is a flash of lightning from on high, that brands a Cain-mark on the forehead, which makes it repulsive forever. After making all deductions, nevertheless, it must be admitted that the discreet speaker, who wishes to convince or persuade, will abstain from personalities. When a man is smarting under the stings of a merciless sarcasm, he is as impassive to reason as if he were drunk or mad. For the sake of their own reputation, therefore,—as convincing debaters, to say nothing of the interests they advocate,—members of legislative bodies should beware of rousing to obstinacy their associates, by violating the courtesy which should mark the collision, not less than the friendly intercourse, of cultivated and polished minds. We might add that the meanest insect has its sting, and that men who wantonly seek to wound their inferiors, whom they deem incapable of defending themselves, often, in the blindness of their insolence, tread on a scorpion instead of a worm, and receive a sting where they only anticipated the pleasure of seeing a victim writhe. It is said of Dr. Priestley that, in all his controversies, verbal

or written, he never gave offense by an allusion or a word; and we may add that Lord Castlereagh, who was so successful in the British Parliament, carried ten points by his good humor, courtesy, and personal influence, to every one that he carried by his logic. These qualities made him a favorite with the House of Commons, though he sorely taxed its patience, and sometimes tried its gravity; as when he spoke of "the *Herculean* labor of the honorable and learned member, who will find himself quite disappointed when at last he brings forth his *Hercules*."

On the other hand, O'Connell, mighty as was his eloquence, neutralized its influence in a great measure by the frequency and bitterness of his sarcasms. It was said of him that his mind consisted of two compartments,—the one inhabited by the purest angels, the other by the vilest demons,—and that the occupation of his life was to transfer his friends from the one to the other. The Duke of Wellington he stigmatized as "a stunted corporal"; while to other opponents he applied such terms as "a mighty big liar," or "a lineal descendant of the impenitent thief," or "a titled buffoon," or "a contumelious cur," or "a pig," or "a scorpion." A speaker who uses such epithets puts himself beyond the pale of courtesy; and we are not surprised, therefore, to learn that the great agitator prejudiced all moderate men against him, embarrassed his action in the House of Commons, and finally drew down upon himself its formal reprimand.

## CHAPTER IX.

### POLITICAL ORATORS: ENGLISH.

“ We, we have seen the intellectual race  
Of giants stand, like Titans, face to face,—  
Athos and Ida,— with a dashing sea  
Of eloquence between, which flowed all free,  
As the deep billows of the Ægean roar  
Betwixt the Hellenic and the Pelasgic shore.”—BYRON.

OF modern countries, no one, except perhaps France, has been more prolific of great orators than Great Britain. It is, however, a remarkable fact, that, though there were great debaters, there was hardly one preëminent orator in England till the time of the brilliant and versatile BOLINGBROKE. Ben Jonson has left us a memorial of Bacon's way of speaking, and those who are familiar with the “Essays” and the “Advancement of Learning” can easily imagine with what majesty he spoke, and what illuminations of original thought characterized his addresses. As an orator, he was stately, weighty, and convincing,—the very opposite of a declaimer. A studied speaker, he affected gravity and wise sententiousness; speaking “leisurely, and rather drawlingly than hastily,” on the principle that “a slow speech confirmeth the memory,—addeth a conceit of wisdom to the hearers, besides a seemliness of speech and countenance.” “No man,” says Jonson, “spoke more pressly, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness in what he uttered. His hearers could not cough, or look aside from him without loss. He commanded where he spoke, and had

his judges angry and pleased at his discretion. The fear of every one that heard him was that he should make an end." During the Commonwealth, when the highest interests were imperilled, and men's hearts were stirred to their very depths, neither Cavaliers nor Puritans put forward a single great orator. Strafford, indeed, defended himself with genuine eloquence; but in vain shall we look elsewhere for great thoughts conveyed in burning words, or for maxims which have become the current coin of the realm. The speeches of Pym are able, but tedious and dreary, and we wonder that enthusiasm could ever have found expression in language so cold and spiritless. At the Restoration the style of speaking changed; "the Cavaliers were men of the world, who talked the language of the world. They flung aside that heavy scholastic garb which stifled sentiments instead of adorning them, and made a closer approximation to simplicity and to nature." It was not till Queen Anne's reign, that parliamentary eloquence took the form which it wears to-day, and of that reign the foremost speaker was Bolingbroke.

To the rare gifts of this remarkable man all his contemporaries have testified in the most enthusiastic terms. Nature seems to have lavished upon him nearly all the qualities necessary to a great parliamentary speaker. Tall, graceful, with handsome features lit up from time to time by the fire in his eyes, or his bright, winning smile,—possessing a rich, musical voice, of more than ordinary modulation and power, and an easy, impressive action,—he added to these advantages an unrivalled quickness of apprehension, a logical understanding, a lively fancy, a sparkling wit, an exquisite taste, and a memory so tenacious that he was wont to complain of it as inconvenient,



and to allege it as an excuse for limiting his reading to the best authors. Still further to qualify him for leadership, he had read all the best Latin authors, had acquired a thorough knowledge of the best writers in the English and other modern languages, had given considerable time to metaphysics, and to an unusual acquaintance with ancient had added a consummate knowledge of modern history. Besides all these qualifications, he had the fire and energy which belong to genius only; and such, we are told, was his facility of expression, that even in the abandonment of familiar conversation, his words would have stood the test of the severest criticism. He spoke with such taste and accuracy that his language might have been printed, without discredit to him, as it fell from his lips. Lastly, he had, what was a more signal advantage in those days than now, the prestige of high birth and ample fortune.

Entering Parliament at the age of twenty-two, he won almost at a bound the reputation of being the most brilliant and fascinating orator of his time. His fastidious contemporaries regarded his eloquence as almost supernatural. Chesterfield, himself an accomplished speaker, pronounces him the model ideal orator, and Chatham, the only Englishman who could contest his claim to the palm, declared that he would rather win from oblivion Lord Bolingbroke's unreported speeches than the lost books of Livy,—an opinion indorsed by the severer taste of Chatham's son. Unfortunately not one of the speeches of the British Alcibiades has come down to us; and therefore, though we may criticise, if we please, the theatrical tone of Chatham, or the floridity of Sheridan's Begum effusion, we must accept the uniform traditional reports of Bolingbroke's eloquence, as we admit the greatness of Garrick

as an actor. Of one department of oratory he was, beyond dispute, a consummate master. In invective, at once passionate and dignified, furious yet not extravagant, he had no equal. No other speaker of his age could bend that silver bow, or launch those deadly arrows. Perhaps the highest tribute ever paid to his oratorical genius was that paid by his old enemy, Sir Robert Walpole, the British premier. When Bolingbroke's attainder was removed, and he was allowed to return from banishment and resume his family estate in England, he was not allowed to resume his seat in the House of Peers. All else was restored to him, but the sagacious premier dared not restore to his adversary the privilege of raising his voice in Parliament, lest the throne of the Guelph should reel before the sound of its trumpet-peal,—a tacit homage to his eloquence which far transcends any spoken praise.

Though Bolingbroke's speeches have not come down to us, yet his writings have, and from these we can form an idea, not altogether inadequate, of his powers as an orator. Generally there is a great difference between a man's styles as a writer and a speaker; but Bolingbroke was an exception to the rule. His style is clear, nervous, flowing, idiomatic, attractively colored, and tastefully embellished, manifesting much of Addison's elegance without his tameness, and the sententious dignity of Johnson without his pomposity. It abounds especially in periodical climax, and signally illustrates Quintilian's rule for sentential increase, *augere debent sententiae et insurgere*. Few writers have combined in so happy proportions the Latin and the Saxon elements of our tongue. Chesterfield declared that till he read Bolingbroke, he did not know the extent and power of the English language; it was not

a studied or labored eloquence, he said, but a flowing happiness of expression. A recent English writer says: "I unhesitatingly place him at the head of all the prose writers of our language."\* Among his most striking merits are the beauty and propriety of his images and illustrations, which are never introduced for mere ornament, but to support the argument they adorn,—like buttresses, which, however relieved with tracery, add an air of solidity to the building they prop. In his Letter to Windham, he says: "The ocean which environs us is an emblem of our government, and the pilot and the minister are in similar circumstances. It seldom happens that either of them can steer a direct course, and they both arrive at their port by means which frequently seem to carry them from it." Again, in "The Spirit of Patriotism," he says: "Eloquence must flow like a stream that is fed by an abundant spring, and not spout forth a little frothy water on some gaudy day, and remain dry all the rest of the year."

Lord Lytton says truly of Bolingbroke, that his sentences "flow loose as if disdainful of verbal care; yet throughout all there reigns the senatorial decorum. The folds of the toga are not arranged to show off the breadth of the purple hem; the wearer knows too well that, however the folds may fall, the hem cannot fail to be seen." It is an interesting fact noted by the latest biographer of Bolingbroke, that his literary works resemble spoken eloquence far more than those of any other man that ever wrote. They are clearly the composition of an orator, who, being prevented from addressing an audience by word of mouth, uses the pen as his instrument,

\* "Memoirs of Eminent Etonians," by Sir Edward Creasy.

and writes what he would have spoken. Not only is his method, or rather lack of method, oratorical, discussing the subject as he does in the first way that presents itself, and handling it skillfully, earnestly and strikingly in many of its parts, but never exhausting it,—but the diction, as Lord Brougham remarks, “is eminently that of oratorical works. It is bold, rapid, animated, yet pointed and correct, bearing the closest scrutiny of the critic when submitted to the eye in the hour of calm judgment, but admirably calculated to fill the ear, and carry away the feelings in the moment of excitement.” Again, it is well known that he disliked the mechanical drudgery of writing; that he could not bear to develop his ideas on paper with the pen, but employed an amanuensis, and dictated many of his literary productions. “When he wrote,” says Mr. Macknight, “he was addressing an imaginary audience, exciting imaginary cheers, and frequently defying and assailing a hated rival, who was not at all imaginary; but whether in youth or age,—while St. John, speaking in the House of Commons, or, as Viscount Bolingbroke, composing the letters to the ‘Craftsman,’—still the same unconquered and unconquerable foe.”

Lord Brougham, at the end of his well-known sketch of Bolingbroke, expresses the opinion that if the concurring accounts of witnesses, and the testimony to his speeches borne by his writings, may be trusted, “he must be pronounced to stand, upon the whole, at the head of modern orators. There may have been more measure and matured power in Pitt, more fire in the occasional bursts of Chatham, more unbridled vehemence, more intent reasoning in Fox, more deep-toned declamation in passages of Chatham, more learned imagery in Burke, more wit

and humor in Canning; but, as a whole, and taking in all rhetorical gifts, and all the orator's accomplishments, no one, perhaps hardly the union of several of them, can match what we are taught by tradition to admire in Bolingbroke's spoken eloquence, and what the study of his works makes us easily believe to be true."

Far above Bolingbroke, we think (notwithstanding the high authority just quoted), and overtopping every other orator Great Britain has produced, stands LORD CHATHAM. It was in 1736 that the voice of "the great Commoner" was first heard within the walls of Parliament, eliciting from Sir Robert Walpole the exclamation, "We must muzzle that terrible cornet of horse." Few orators of equal fame have been, in some respects, so poorly equipped. Great as was his genius, it was far from being well-balanced and disciplined; there was, indeed, a certain mixture of splendor and slovenliness in his character. Dr. King declared that he had no learning, and Lord Chesterfield that not only did he have very little political knowledge, but that his matter was generally flimsy, and his arguments often weak. His sister, Mrs. Anne Pitt, used to say sarcastically that he had read no book but the "Faery Queen." It is well known, however, that, to gain a mastery of language, he translated the speeches of Demosthenes into English, and pondered over the weighty periods of Barrow till he had many of his long and exhaustive sermons almost by heart. He also read Bailey's Dictionary twice through, and even articulated before a glass to perfect the use of his native tongue. But though his intellectual acquisitions were comparatively slender, few men have received from nature so many of the outward qualifications of the orator. In his

best days, before he was crippled by the gout, he had a tall and striking figure, an imposing attitude, aquiline and noble features, and a glance of fire. His voice was a marvellous combination of sweetness and strength. It had all the silvery sweetness of a Clay's or a Phillips's, and was distinctly heard even when it sank to a whisper; its middle notes were charming and beautifully varied, while its higher tones, which completely filled the House, pealed and thrilled like the swell of some majestic organ. "The effect was awful," says one who heard him, "except when he wished to cheer or animate; then he had spirit-stirring notes which were perfectly irresistible."

His speeches, as they have come down to us, are confessedly fragments; but even these "shreds of unconnected eloquence" are without a parallel. They blaze with the authentic fire of the imagination,—of the imagination in the full sweep of excited and overmastering feeling. They are the masterful words of a great man; haughty and arrogant words sometimes, no doubt, but haughty and arrogant because the speaker, in the pride of his integrity, scorned from the depths of his soul all meanness, and baseness, and *finesse*. Grattan said of his eloquence, that it was an era in the Senate; that it resembled sometimes the thunder, and sometimes the music, of the spheres. In purely *physical* influence over his audience he was never surpassed. No other orator ever approached him in the sway which he exercised over his hearers, while the spell of his voice, his eye, his tones, his gestures, was upon them. He entered the lists like a gladiator. Seizing on some stronghold in the argument,—some stubborn fact,—he held it with a giant's grasp. He did not argue with his opponents, but asserted; he wrested their weapons out of

their hands by main force. The *ipsi dixi*, the "I affirm," "I am ready to maintain," "I pledge myself to prove," constituted all his logic.

In moments of intense passion he was like the Sibyl on her tripod. The oldest member, the hardiest wit of the House, quailed before "the terrors of his beak and the lightning of his eye." Having a perfect mastery of his subject, a thorough conviction, an intense interest, he instinctively and unavoidably, by his vehemence of manner, his tones, his commanding attitudes and eager gestures, conveyed these to his hearers. His will was surcharged with electric matter, and all who stood within its reach felt the force of the shock. Employing a bold, brief, and pointed mode of expressing daring truths, sometimes by metaphor, sometimes by antithesis, and possessing a spirit as dauntless as his language, he defied contradiction, and any attempt to check him only drew from him an indignant and defiant repetition of the offense.

Never was there a more terrible antagonist,—one who awed his opponents more by the fierceness and boldness of his invectives, or roused popular enthusiasm to a higher pitch by the short and vehement sentences in which he embodied the feverish passions of the hour. It is said that once in the House of Commons he began a speech with the words, "Sugar, Mr. Speaker,"—and then, seeing a smile pervade the audience, he paused, glared fiercely around, and, with a loud voice, rising in his notes, and swelling into vehement anger, he pronounced again the word "Sugar!" three times. Having thus quelled the House, and dispelled every appearance of levity or laughter, he turned round and scornfully asked: "Who will laugh at sugar *now*?" Charles Butler states in his "Re-

miniscences" that on another occasion Lord Chatham rose and walked out of the House, at his usual slow pace, immediately after he had finished his speech. A silence ensued till the door opened to let him into the lobby; and then a member started up, saying, "I rise to reply to the honorable member." Lord Chatham turned back, and fixed his eye on the orator, who instantly sat down dumb; then his lordship returned to his seat, repeating, as he hobbled along, the verses of Virgil:

"At Danaüm proceres, Agamemnoniaque phalanges,  
 Ut vidère virum fulgentiaque arma per umbras  
 Ingenti trepidare metu: pars vertere terga,  
 Ceu quondam petiere rates: pars tollere vocem  
 Exiguam: inceptus clamor frustratur hiantes."

Then, placing himself in his seat, he exclaimed: "Now let me hear what the honorable member has to say to me." When Mr. Butler asked the person, an eye-witness, from whom he obtained this anecdote, if the House did not laugh at the ridiculous figure of the poor member, he replied: "*No, sir, we were all too awed to laugh.*"

Mr. Butler gives another still more striking illustration of the manner in which the haughty ~~orator~~ overawed his associates. Moreton, Chief Justice of Chester, happened to say in the House, "King, Lords, and Commons, or (looking at the first Pitt) as that right honorable member would term them, Commons, Lords, and King." Pitt called him to order, and desired the words to be taken down. They were written down by the clerk. "Bring them to me," said Pitt, in his loftiest tone. By this time Moreton was frightened out of his senses. "Sir," he stammered out, addressing the Speaker, "I am sorry to have given any offense to the right honorable member or to the House. I meant nothing. King, Lords, and Commons,—Lords,



King, and Commons,—Commons, Lords, and King: *tria juncta in uno*. I meant nothing; indeed, I meant nothing." Pitt rose: "I don't wish to push the matter further. The moment a man acknowledges his error, he ceases to be guilty. I have a great regard for the honorable member, and as an instance of that regard, I give him this advice: whenever he *means* nothing, I recommend him to *say* nothing." It was the dramatic genius of Chatham, his perfect acting, that achieved these victories; without it, some of his most splendid bursts would have been failures. So consummate were his gesture and delivery, that Horace Walpole often calls him "Old Garrick."

Even the infirmities of Chatham were turned to account; his flannel bandage aided his touches of pathos, and even his crutch became a weapon of oratory. It is true he was singularly wordy; yet in this very trick of verbal reduplication lies half his strength. Such pleonasms as "I was credulous, I was duped, I was deceived,"—"It was unjust, groundless, illiberal, unmanly," occur again and again.—"I am *astonished*, I am *shocked*, to hear such principles *confessed*; to hear them *avowed* in this House and in this country."—"The country was *sold* at the late peace; it was *sold* by the Court of Turin to the Court of France."—"A breach has been made in the Constitution,—the battlements are dismantled, the citadel is open to the first invader, the walls totter, the place is no longer tenable; what then remains for us but to stand foremost in the breach, to repair it, or to perish in it?" "To maintain this principle is the common cause of the Whigs on the other side of the Atlantic and on this. 'Tis liberty to liberty engaged,' that they will defend themselves, their families, and their country. In this cause they are im-

movably allied; it is the alliance of God and of nature,—*immutable, eternal,—fixed as the firmament of heaven.*”

Like Danton, he relied on *l'audace*, as in the famous passage where he declared, “I rejoice that America has resisted,” and when, with even more defiance, he said: “I hope some dreadful calamity will befall the country, that may open the eyes of the King.” Here, according to Grattan, he introduced an allusion to the figure drawing the curtains of Priam, and gave the quotation, when he was called to order, but went on: “What I have spoken I have spoken conditionally, and I now retract the condition. I speak it absolutely, and I hope that some signal calamity *will* befall the country.” He bore down all by his intensity, by reiterating blow upon blow, as upon an anvil. “I say we must necessarily undo these violent, oppressive acts. They *must* be repealed. You *will* repeal them. I pledge myself for it that you will in the end repeal them. I stake my reputation on it. I will consent to be taken for an *idiot*, if they are not finally repealed.” “Conquer the Americans!” he exclaimed: “I might as well think of driving them before me with this crutch!” “I come not here armed at all points with law-cases and acts of parliament, *with the statute-book doubled down in dogs-ears, to defend the cause of liberty,*” he exclaimed with superb scorn, in answer to Grenville’s argument upon the right to tax the colonies. Again, addressing the Administration of Lord North, he said: “Such are your well-known characters and abilities, that sure I am that any plan of reconciliation, however moderate, wise, and feasible, must fail in your hands. Who, then, can wonder that you should put a negative on any measure which must annihilate your power, deprive you of your emoluments, and at once

*reduce you to that state of insignificance for which God and nature designed you?"*

Never was there an orator who spoke more completely from the impulse of the moment. Bestowing no care on his language, imagery, or illustrations, he poured out his thoughts just as they rose in his teeming and fiery brain; and when he rose, stirred to anger by some sudden subterfuge of corruption or device of tyranny, there was heard an eloquence never surpassed in ancient or modern times. Eloquent as he was, however, he impressed every hearer with the conviction that the man was greater than the orator. His whole manner was kingly. He was one of nature's autocrats, to whom men yielded by instinct. "There was a grandeur in his personal appearance," says a writer who speaks of him in his decline, "which produced awe and mute attention; and though bowed by infirmity and age, his mind shone through the ruins of his body, armed his eye with lightning, and clothed his lip with thunder." "He was born an orator," says Wilkes, "and from nature possessed every outward requisite to bespeak respect, and even awe; a manly figure, with the eagle eye of the great Condé, fixed your attention, and almost commanded reverence the moment he appeared; and the keen lightning of his eye spoke the high respect of his soul before his lips had pronounced a syllable. There was a kind of fascination in his look when he eyed any one askance. Nothing could withstand the force of that contagion. The fluent Murray has faltered, and even Fox shrunk back appalled from an adversary 'fraught with fire unquenchable,' if I may borrow an expression of our great Milton." Even Franklin lost his coolness, when speaking of Lord Chatham. "I

have sometimes," said he, "seen eloquence without wisdom, and often wisdom without eloquence; but in him I have seen them united in the highest possible degree."

As the veteran gladiator was borne away from the arena, two youthful athletes appeared upon it,—Charles James Fox and WILLIAM PITT. If the elder Pitt was an orator by nature, the younger Pitt was no less truly an orator by art. Not that he lacked genius, for he was a marvel of precocity; but from his earliest youth he was unwearied in the pains he took to qualify himself for debate. Even in childhood he seemed to have an instinctive perception of the bent of his talents. When only seven years of age, he told his tutor how glad he was at not being the eldest son, for "he wanted to speak in the House of Commons like papa." A year later Lady Holland, who saw him at Lady Hester Pitt's, wrote to her husband: "He is really the cleverest child I ever saw, and brought up so strictly and so proper, that,—mark my words,—that little boy will prove a thorn in Charles's\* side as long as he lives." But great as were his natural gifts, he did not rely upon them, but strove in every way to perfect himself in the accomplishments necessary to the orator. Not only did the gouty Earl, his father, watch his early education with jealous care, but he had himself so earnestly seconded his father's efforts that, in spite of his bodily weakness, when he went to Cambridge in 1773, a boy of fourteen, he was already, in parts and learning, a grown man. From the earliest childhood his powers of speech had been trained in every possible way,—by reciting daily choice passages from the best English au-

\* Charles James Fox.

thors, by rendering aloud pages of some Greek or Roman orator into choice and nervous English, by studying with minute attention the works of Bolingbroke and Barrow, of Polybius and Thucydides, and by dwelling for hours together on some striking passage in the masterpieces of ancient oratory. The debate in Pandemonium, says Macaulay, was one of his favorite passages, and his early friends used to talk together, long after his death, of the just emphasis and melodious cadence with which they had heard him recite the incomparable speech of Belial.

Even after he had taken his Master's degree at the University, at the age of seventeen, he still kept his terms, and read with his tutor for four more years. By the end of this time he had gone through almost every known Greek and Latin author, had made some progress in the study of natural philosophy and civil law, and in mathematics had gained a proficiency which qualified him to stand for wrangler's honors. Though not fond of composition in the dead languages, he read classic authors with intense delight,—catching instinctively the meaning of the hardest passages, dwelling especially on the niceties of language and the differences of style, and discriminating the essential from the non-essential in such studies with almost intuitive quickness and tact. So complete was his mastery of the Greek that his tutor declared his firm belief that no one ever read it, even after devoting a whole life to its study, with greater facility than did Pitt at twenty-one. Lord Grenville afterward pronounced him the best Greek scholar he ever conversed with; and Lord Wellesley said that “with astonishing facility he applied the whole spirit of ancient learning to his use.” It was, however, to the orators of antiquity that he turned with

the most instinctive fondness; loving, especially, to compare the opposite speeches on the same subject supplied by Thucydides, Livy, and Sallust. Besides these studies, he familiarized himself with Shakspeare and Milton, Hume and Robertson, and thoroughly analyzed and mastered the great Essay of Locke. Not only his favorite studies, but other circumstances, indicated the bias of the future orator. The barber who attended him, on approaching the oak door of his room, overheard him declaiming to himself within. Before other boys left school, he was holding mock debates at the "Crown and Anchor," in London, and astonishing men who lived to see his great parliamentary triumphs, and who declared that even these did not surpass the efforts of the amateur. Long before he scandalized the dons of Cambridge by presuming to set up for an M.P. at the University, the young athlete was to be seen in the gallery of the House of Commons, exercising his memory, and training himself for his future struggles by hearing and answering in his own mind the great geniuses of debate.

No wonder that when he sprang into the arena, the cry arose that a giant had taken the field. He passed into the front rank of debaters at the first bound. It was in support of Burke's motion for Economical Reform that he made his maiden effort; and though called upon suddenly to answer an adverse speaker, he arose and made, on the spur of the moment, a reply that took the whole House by surprise. A hundred eyes strove to trace in the features and manner of the young orator the old familiar lineaments of the sire who slept in Westminster. A hundred memories recalled the trumpet tones which had so often roused the chivalry of England to action. "It is not a *chip* of the old block," said Burke, "it is the

old block itself." Rarely, however, has a son so gifted been so unlike his father. While the elder Pitt was fiery and impetuous, hasty in his resolves, and moved by the suggestions of a vivid imagination, the younger was cold, formal, and statuesque, deficient in imagination, always logical and argumentative, and, if occasionally roused, so wary and circumspect, that Mr. Fox declared that "in a twenty years' contest he had never once caught him tripping," and Mr. Windham declared that he could at any moment speak a king's speech off-hand. The one was rapid, electric, vehement; the other chaste, classic, persuasive. The one awed into acquiescence; the other argued into conviction. Instead of the bold, brief, and pointed manner of expressing daring truths, sometimes by metaphor and sometimes by antithesis, which characterized his father's burning appeals, the younger Pitt spoke what has been happily termed "a state-paper style." His sentences, which fell from him as easily as if he had been talking, were stately, flowing, and harmonious,—kept up throughout to the same level,—and set off by a fine voice and a dignified bearing; but, though the language was sonorous, pure, and clear, it lacked fire; his intonation was monotonous, and his gestures passionless; and the dullest reader of his speeches cannot but see that in the energy and picturesqueness of his brightest flashes Lord Chatham was as superior to William Pitt as William Pitt was superior to Chatham in logic and the knowledge of politics and finance.

It has been justly said that it is only on rare occasions that the true orator of the House of Commons has to nerve himself for the heights of his art; his reputation is more habitually fixed according to the strength

and facility with which he moves upon level ground. It was here that Pitt excelled all his rivals. "In the formal introduction of a question, in the perspicuity of explanation in detail, in short and apt rejoinder in business-like debate, no man was so delightful to listen to; the decorum of his bearing, the fluency of his diction, the exquisite lucidity of his utterance, must have been a relief to Fox's preliminary stutter, shrill key-note, lifted fist, and redundant action,—to Burke's Irish brogue and episodical discursions." Of sarcasm he was a consummate master; probably no speaker ever wielded that weapon with more dexterity and force. The chief secret, however, of his weight and influence in the House was his uniform earnestness,—the feeling of all who listened to him that he always spoke from conviction, never from love of display or for mere "effect." Unlike one of his successors at the present day, "the exquisite Hebrew juggler," who never seems more than a clever and gentlemanly actor, even when most animated, and who apparently could transfer "the cold glitter of his rhetoric," with little difficulty, to the advocacy of the cause he is attacking, Pitt's sincerity was never for a moment doubted. "He spoke," says Lord North, "like a born minister"; and if he failed in wit, playfulness, and the ornaments and graces of style, it was from prudence, not from penury, because he thought that "the spangles would little accord with the purple hem of his toga." As one who heard him declares: "The distinguishing excellence of his speaking corresponded to the distinguishing excellence of his whole mental system; every part of his speaking, in sentiment, in language, and in delivery, evidently bore, in our judgment, the stamp of his character,—all communicated to us a definite



yet vivid appearance of the qualities of strenuousness without effort, unlabored intrepidity, and serene greatness."\*

If the exhibition of deep feeling is the test of sincerity, and the appearance of sincerity the test of a great orator, one of the greatest orators that ever lived was CHARLES JAMES FOX. The hurried sentence, the involuntary exclamation, the vehement gesture, the sudden start, the agitation,—every peculiarity of his manner,—indicated an eloquence that came from the very depths of the soul. Loose in his arrangement,—neither polished nor exact in his style,—often hesitating and stammering at the start, he exercised a prodigious influence on his hearers, because, as Sir James Mackintosh says, "he forgot himself and everything around him." He was but little more than a boy in years, when, in flagrant violation of the rules, he entered the House of Commons, and found himself at the age of nineteen one of the legislators of the British Empire. Educated at Eton and Oxford, he had shown a taste for mathematics, and especially for the classics, which he read with critical accuracy, and had also acquired a rare mastery of the French language. While at these seats of learning, he is said to have astonished his masters as much by the levity of his conduct as by the quickness and brilliancy of his talents, while he already exerted over his school-fellows the fascination which he exerted in after years over his fellow men. Devoting himself with equal earnestness to pleasure and to study, he wasted the night in dissipation, and then applied himself fiercely to his books, spending upon them not less

\* Quarterly Review, August 1810.

than nine or ten hours a day. The fruits of this application were seen in the passionate love which he manifested all his life for the great authors of antiquity, whose society he sought in the intervals of the fiercest political conflicts, and whose inspiration, no doubt, often directed the thunders of eloquence with which he shook the House of Commons.

Unfortunately he had early acquired a passion for gaming, which became at last so intense, that, being asked what was the greatest happiness in life, he replied, "To play and to win"; and to the question what was the next greatest, he replied, "To play, and to lose." It was during a visit to Spa, when he was hardly fifteen years of age, that he was first drawn into the vortex of play, and it is said that Lord Holland, his father, instead of checking, encouraged this fatal passion by allowing him five guineas a night to waste on the amusement. On leaving Oxford, he made a tour on the Continent, where he contracted vast debts in every capital, his liabilities at Naples alone amounting to £16,000. The purchase of annuities which he had granted to cover his losses at play, cost Lord Holland; it is said, more than £140,000. When Fox's prodigality compelled his father to summon him home, "his *chapeau bras*, red-heeled shoes, blue hair-powder," and fashionable airs, showed, we are told, that he had become one of the most egregious coxcombs in Europe. As an offset to this dissipation, he had acquired a keen relish for Italian literature, which prompted him to write in a letter to a friend: "For God's sake, learn Italian as fast as you can, if it be only to read Ariosto! There is more good poetry in Italian than in all other languages that I understand put together." In his youth Fox was also passionately fond of

private theatricals, where he distinguished himself both in tragedy and high comedy; and it is supposed by some writers that these experiences were useful to him, not only in helping him to modulate his voice, but also in enabling him early in life to conquer the terrible impediment to oratory which is known as "stage-fright."

Few orators who have attained to equal eminence have been endowed by nature with so few of the physical gifts of the great orator. It is true that he had in the highest degree the oratorical temperament, and, as Bulwer has remarked, in the union of natural passion with scholastic reasoning excelled all others who have dignified the British senate. "His feeling," said Coleridge, "was all intellect, and his intellect all feeling." But he had none of the beauty of person which enabled Bolingbroke to please without an effort, nor did his speech have any of that melody with which Chatham charmed an assembly. He spoke always as if he was in a passion; his gesticulation was extravagant and graceless; his whole manner ungainly; his voice husky; and his articulation, in spite of all his efforts to improve it, so indistinct as to be at times unintelligible. When about to begin a speech, he advanced slowly, with a heavy, lumbering air, to the table, and began fumbling awkwardly with his fingers in a way which,—with his general coarseness of appearance, his careless, half-buttoned vest, his crumpled linen, his almost slovenly attire,—provoked, in one who heard him for the first time, a feeling of disappointment. But this very awkwardness of manner,—his entangled, broken sentences, the choking of his voice, and the scream with which he delivered his vehement passages,—only deepened the interest with which he was listened to, because they were

regarded as proofs of his absolute sincerity. Moreover, these defects gave to the merits which redeemed them the thrilling suddenness of surprise, and so he was "patiently allowed to splutter and stammer out his way into the heart of his subject, grappling, as it were, with the ideas that embarrassed his choice by the pressure of their throng, till, once selected and marshalled into order, they emerged from the wildness of a tumult into the discipline of an army."

As he gradually warmed with his theme, his declamation flowed from him in a torrent. "Every sentence," says Grattan, "came rolling like a wave of the Atlantic, three thousand miles long." At times his tongue faltered, his voice grew stifled, and his face was bathed in tears. But though his words escaped from him, rather than were spoken, they were the vehicle of close and often of subtle and unanswerable argument. Argument, which was his passion in public and in private, upon the greatest and the pettiest themes, was his strongest point. It was for this reason, perhaps, and because of his fervid, rapid, copious manner, that Sir James Mackintosh called him the most Demosthenic orator since Demosthenes. Unlike the great orator of Greece, who carefully chose and collocated his words, and never wasted an epithet, he was careless and slovenly in his style; he abounded in repetitions, too, while the Greek "never came back upon a ground which he had utterly wasted and withered up by the tide of fire he had rolled over it." Beginning his career with the determination to excel in this department of public speaking, Fox was indefatigable in his efforts to perfect himself, till he rose at last, as Burke said, to be the most brilliant and accomplished debater the world ever saw. "During five whole sessions," he used to say, "I spoke

every night but one; and I regret that I did not speak on that night, too." Like every other great orator, he attained his skill, in part, at the expense of those who heard him.

His power as an orator is the more wonderful when we consider his habits of life. He rose late, and before he had quitted his bedroom, was surrounded by a circle of witty and accomplished disciples, with whom he discussed the questions of the hour. Wrapped in a "foul linen night-gown" that only partially concealed his black and "bristly person," his hair matted, and his hands unwashed, he marshalled the forces of the opposition, and devised the tactics of the campaign. The day he spent at the Newmarket races; in the evening he assailed the minister; the night was consumed at Almack's, where the youthful aristocracy of England scattered, with a cast of the dice, the hoarded savings of centuries. Only the most vigorous and elastic constitution could have stood such an incessant drain of its energies; yet Fox, who was ten years older than Pitt, outlived him nearly eight months. When Fox was but twenty-two years old, Horace Walpole, who had been to hear him in the House of Commons, spoke of him as "the meteor of those days." "Fox's abilities," he adds, "are amazing at so very early a period, especially under the circumstances of such a dissolute life. He was just arrived from Newmarket, and had sat up drinking all night, and had not been in bed. How such talents make one laugh at Tully's rules for an orator, and his indefatigable application! His labored orations are puerile in comparison to this boy's manly reason." Again, at a later day, he exclaims: "What a man Fox is! After his long and exhausting speech on Hastings's trial,

he was seen handing the ladies into their coaches with all the gayety and prattle of an idle gallant.\*

Though an accomplished scholar and well-grounded in history, Fox had little philosophical or economical knowledge. Adam Smith's great work he never troubled himself to read, and Montesquieu's "Spirit of the Laws" he deemed full of nonsense. His understanding was powerful and sagacious rather than acute and subtle, better fitted for appreciating the actual than for examining the abstract and speculative. One of his most valuable gifts was his quick, instinctive perception of an adversary's weakness, and the advantage to be taken of it,—an advantage which, according to a modern orator, is, in the war of words, what the *coup d'oeil* of a practised general is in the field. Hence he was always happiest in reply; and if interrupted by cries of "order," pressed home his arguments with increasing vehemence till the redoubled blows and repeated bursts of extemporaneous declamation almost overpowered the audience, while they effectually checked all further interruption. It has been justly said that in his climaxes he was especially happy; argument was piled upon argument until it seemed as though the whole must fall by its own weight. But there was no danger of that; for if the burden was a gigantic one, there was a giant to bear it. In nothing is his prodigious power as a debater more strikingly shown than in the fact, that, after having stated the argument of his adversary with tenfold more force than his adversary him-

\* Fox's delightful social qualities, his sunny humor, sweetness of temper, and forgiving disposition, which endeared him to his associates, are well known. To a French abbé, who expressed his surprise that a country so moral as England could submit to be governed by a man so wanting in private character as Fox, Pitt replied: "*C'est que vous n'avez pas été sous la baguette du magicien.*— (It is because you have not been under the wand of the magician)."

self had put it, so that his friends were alarmed lest he should fail to answer it, he proceeded to rend it in pieces, thus making the contrast between it and its destruction only the more vivid. Another of his peculiarities was the consummate skill with which he turned an attack into a defense,—often, it has been said, turning the very words of his adversaries, like captured artillery, upon themselves. Hardly less surprising was his wit,—the wit which holds up to ridicule the absurdities, inconsistencies, or weak points of an opponent's argument,—which he had in a rare degree. Both Pitt and Canning pronounced him the wittiest speaker of his times. Fox had not the teeming knowledge, the broad-sweeping views, the marvellous forecast, the prophetic vision, of Burke; but he surpassed him as an orator, because he had more tact, and kept to the topics of the hour. His were not the grand strategic movements of which few have the patience to await the issue. They were close, hand-to-hand fights with the adversaries in his front; and hence the reason why his speeches, which were so impressive and even irresistible when delivered, are comparatively so cold and lifeless now.

An English writer has thus vividly contrasted the styles of the two orators we have last described: "Pitt's style was stately, sonorous, full to abundance, smooth, and regular in its flow; Fox's, free to carelessness, rapid, rushing, turbid, broken, but overwhelming in its swell. Pitt never sank below his ordinary level, never paused in his declamation, never hesitated for a word; if interrupted by a remark or incident, he disposed of it parenthetically, and held on the even and lofty tenor of his way. Fox was desultory and ineffective till he warmed; he did best

when he was provoked or excited; he required the kindling impulse, the explosive spark; or he might be compared to the rock in Horeb before it was struck. . . . Passionately enamored of life,—loving pleasure intensely, and quitting it with difficulty and regret,—wanting, indeed, in the patient courage, foresight, and energy of the disciplined intellect, but wielding with matchless skill a burning eloquence, searchingly argumentative even when most impetuous,—to us he recalls the simple and courageous tribune of a degraded populace,—the old orator, who could weep for very shame that they will *not* be stirred, as high above the crowd he thunders against the insolent dictator, and casts down his fiery words, like hail-stones, upon the upturned faces of the people! . . .

“They spent their lives together, and in death they were not divided. Pitt died,—of old age,—at forty-six; a few months elapsed, and Fox was laid by his side. The noble lament in *Marmion* was uttered over the tomb where rest the ashes of both the rivals:

‘Now is the stately column broke,  
The beacon light is quenched in smoke  
The trumpet’s silver sound is still,  
The warder silent on the hill!’”

Among the eminent British orators of this century, GEORGE CANNING stands, undoubtedly, in the front rank. Few public speakers have begun their careers with so many of the outward advantages of an orator. His presence, in spite of a somewhat slight and wiry figure, was remarkably prepossessing. He had a highly intellectual countenance, and his features, finely cut and decisive, were capable of a subtle play and variety of expression, which were admirably adapted to the changes of his elo-



quence. "There is a lighting up of his features and a comic play about the mouth," said Wilberforce, "when the full force of the approaching witticism strikes his own mind, which prepares you for the burst which is to follow." His voice was not loud, but flexible, and so clear and perfectly modulated that it was heard distinctly in every part of the House. Like Fox, Pulteney, and most of the other great parliamentary orators, he did not leap by a few bounds to the front rank, but mastered the art of speaking slowly and by persevering effort. His first speech, made in 1794 on a subsidy to the King of Sardinia, was a comparative failure. It was brilliant but cold, and also too refined in argument, and too methodical in statement. His next speech was better, but was disfigured by a classical pedantry in the style, which, with other defects, led him, by the advice of Mr. Pitt, to keep silent for three years, in order to correct his faults and allow them to be forgotten.

Since the days of Chatham a great change had taken place in the style of speaking in the House of Commons. Formerly the discussions had turned largely upon personalities and abstract sentiments, and were compared by Burke to the loose speeches of a vestry meeting or a debating club. In the time of Pitt and Fox a greater knowledge of the minutiae of a question was demanded, and a still greater in the time of Brougham and Canning. By dint of continual labor and unsparing self-correction, Canning gradually reached the perfection of his own style, the distinguishing qualities of which were rapidity, polish, and ornament. It was this peculiar polish, accompanied by a studied, though apparently natural rapidity, which, according to a good judge, becoming more and more perfect as

it became apparently more natural, subsequently formed the essential excellence of his speaking. "Quick, easy, and fluent, . . . now brilliant and ornamental, then again light and playful, or, if he wished it, clear, simple, and incisive, no speaker ever combined a greater variety of qualities, though many have been superior in each of the excellences which he possessed." Rarely passionate, when he did manifest deep feeling, the effect was electrical. The vehemence was the more striking from the contrast it presented to his ordinarily passionless demeanor, his sarcastic temper, and his habitual reserve.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that he was weakest, on the whole, in his declamatory passages, which are too often wanting in that robustness and power, that grandeur and magnificence, which thrill through the mind. He did not, like Fox, dart fire into his audience, or sweep them along on the torrent of an impetuous and resistless eloquence. He had none of those burning lava-streams with which Brougham scorches and destroys whatever crosses his path. His discourse flows on like the waters of some calm, majestic river unruffled by the wind; we hear nothing of the dash of the torrent, or the roar of the cataract; there are few of the startling apostrophes or soul-stirring appeals which sometimes bring an audience to their feet as one man. Having no very deep convictions, none of the stuff of which martyrs and bigots are made, he seldom forgets himself in his subject. He was constitutionally too fastidious, he had too great a horror of excess in every form, to indulge often in fiery declamation. There is no doubt, too, that, till the latter part of his life, the effect of his speeches was lessened by the elaboration,—the excessive finish,—which they betrayed. His severe and

dainty taste, the extreme care with which he lingered over the rhythmus of a sentence, or even the choice of an epithet,—sometimes degenerated into prudery. It is said that, as minister, he would scan a royal speech till the faintest tinge of color was bleached out of it. If at the eleventh hour it was found to contain a slight grammatical error, he would not present it to the House until the error had been removed.

Sir James Mackintosh pronounces him “the best model, among our orators, of the adorned style”; yet it is evident that he sometimes over-ornamented his speeches, for the same critic admits that Mr. Canning’s hearers were often so dazzled by the splendor of his diction that they did not perceive the acuteness of his reasoning. They were too often confused, also, by the cross-lights which his wit, of which there was always a superabundance, shot over the canvas. As he advanced in years, however, his taste became more and more severe, till even the most microscopic critic of his speeches found few specks to dim their beauty. When he had time to prepare, not a shot miscarried, not an argument was weakened by a needless phrase. The arrow, stripped of all plumage except that which aided and steadied its flight, struck within a hair’s breadth of the archer’s aim. Whether it pierced the joints of his opponent’s harness, or shivered on the shield, might be, sometimes, a question; but that it often wounded deeply, is proved by the retaliation it provoked.

What can be more happy than his allusion to Napoleon after the battle of Leipsic and his retreat to Paris, when the first gleams of victory shone over the gloomy struggle of the Allies for twenty years?

“How was their prospect changed! In those countries where, at most, a short struggle had been terminated by a result disastrous to their wishes, if not altogether closing in despair, they had now to contemplate a very different aspect of affairs. Germany crouched no longer trembling at the feet of the tyrant, but maintained a balanced contest. The mighty deluge by which the Continent had been overwhelmed, is subsiding. The limits of the nations are again visible, and the spires and turrets of ancient establishments are beginning to reappear above the subsiding waves.”

It is rarely that so brilliant a speaker, one so fond of ornament, has such a fund of good sense. He was even familiar with the intricacies of finance, and in one of his speeches (that on the bullion question) “played,” says Horner, “with its most knotty subtleties.” When the British government, in 1811, undertook to make it penal to buy gold at a premium, and a resolution was offered in the House of Commons declaring that the notes of the Bank of England had been, and then were, held in public estimation “to be equivalent to the legal coin of the realm, and generally accepted as such,” Mr. Canning exposed the absurdity of the measure in the following terms, which have as much pertinency to certain American financial schemes, as if uttered with direct reference to them:

“When Galileo first promulgated the doctrine that the earth turned round the sun, and that the sun remained stationary in the centre of the universe, the holy fathers of the Inquisition took alarm at so daring an innovation, and forthwith declared the first of these propositions to be false and heretical, and the other to be erroneous in point of faith. The holy office pledged itself to believe that the earth was stationary, and the sun movable. But this pledge had little effect in changing the natural course of things; the sun and the earth continued, in spite of it, to preserve their accustomed relations to each other, just as the coin and the bank-note will, in spite of the right honorable gentleman’s resolution.”

Another rare merit which Canning finally possessed was that of seizing and giving expression to the general sense of the assembly he addressed. Often, before rising to speak, he would make a lounging tour of the House, listening to the observations which the previous speeches

had excited, so that at last, when he himself spoke, he seemed to many of his hearers to be merely giving a striking and impressive utterance to their own thoughts.

The one weapon of which he was most master was wit. "His irony," it is said, "was swift and stealthy,—it stabbed like a stiletto." Unfortunately, he was only too willing to use it, and as to this was added a somewhat haughty manner, and an apparent indifference to the feelings of those whom he ridiculed, it is no wonder that he often exasperated when he should have sought only to convince. During the first ten years of his parliamentary career, he never made a speech on which he particularly plumed himself, without likewise making an enemy for life. A comic alliteration,—a ludicrous combination of words,—occurring to him, was a temptation he could not resist. The alliterative phrase, "revered and ruptured," applied to an unfortunate person, made Canning more unpopular than the worst acts of his Administration. His sneering description, in 1812, of the American navy as "half-a-dozen fir frigates, with bits of bunting flying at their heads," exasperated the American people more than the impressment of their seamen. As Sir Henry Bulwer says: "He was always young. The head of the sixth form at Eton—squibbing 'the doctor,' as Mr. Addington was called; fighting with Lord Castlereagh; cutting jokes on Lord Nugent; flatly contradicting Lord Brougham; swaggering over the Holy Alliance; he was in perpetual personal quarrels,—one of the reasons which created for him so much personal interest during the whole of his parliamentary career."

One of the best specimens of Mr. Canning's wit is his celebrated sketch of Lord Nugent who went out to join the Spanish patriots when their cause was nearly lost:

“It was about the middle of last July that the heavy Falmouth coach was observed traveling to its destination through the roads of Cornwall, with more than its wonted gravity. The coach contained two inside passengers,—the one a fair lady of no inconsiderable dimensions, the other a gentleman who was conveying the succor of his person to the struggling patriots of Spain.\* I am further informed,—and this interesting fact, sir, can also be authenticated,—that the heavy Falmouth van, (which honorable gentlemen, doubtless, are aware is constructed for the conveyance of cumbrous articles,) was laden, upon the same memorable occasion, with a box of most portentous magnitude. Now, sir, whether this box, like the flying chest of the conjurer, possessed any supernatural properties of locomotion, is a point which I confess I am quite unable to determine; but of this I am most credibly informed,—and I should hesitate long before I stated it to the House, if the statement did not rest upon the most unquestionable authority,—that this extraordinary box contained a full uniform of a Spanish general of cavalry, together with a helmet of the most curious workmanship; a helmet, allow me to add, scarcely inferior in size to the celebrated helmet in the castle of Otranto. Though the idea of going to the relief of a fortress, blockaded by sea and besieged by land, in a full suit of light horseman’s equipments was, perhaps, not strongly consonant to modern military operations, yet when the gentleman and his box made their appearance, the Cortes, no doubt, were overwhelmed with joy, and rubbed their hands with delight at the approach of the long promised aid. How the noble Lord was received, or what effects he operated on the councils of the Cortes by his arrival, I do not know. Things were at that juncture moving rapidly to their final issue; and how far the noble lord conduced to the termination by throwing his weight into the sinking scale of the Cortes, is too nice a question for me just now to settle.”

The finest passage, perhaps, in all Mr. Canning’s speeches is his beautiful picture of the ships in ordinary at Plymouth, as an emblem of England reposing in the quietude of peace. The speech in which it occurs was delivered at Plymouth in 1823, after he had inspected the docks:

“Our present repose is no more a proof of our inability to act than the state of inertness and inactivity in which I have seen those mighty masses that float in the waters above your town is a proof that they are devoid of strength or incapable of being fitted for action. You well know, gentlemen, how soon one of those stupendous masses now reposing on their shadows in perfect stillness—how soon, upon any call of patriotism or of necessity, it would assume the likeness of an animated thing, instinct with life and motion—how soon it would ruffle, as it were, its swelling plumage—how quickly it would put forth all its beauty and its bravery, collect its scattered elements of strength, and awake its dormant thunders. Such as is one of those mag-

\* Lord Nugent was a remarkably large, heavy man, with a head too large in proportion to his body.

nificent machines when springing from inaction into a display of its strength, such is England herself, while, apparently passive and motionless, she silently causes her power to be put forth on an adequate occasion."

It is said that when Paganini was asked who was the first violinist of Europe, he replied: "I do not know; Labinsky is second." LORD BROUGHAM is said to have made a similar evasive reply when asked whom he considered the greatest orator in England. If not the Coryphæus among the great orators of the present century, he stands, beyond all dispute, in the very front rank. He appears early to have adopted Demosthenes as his model; and in one quality he resembles the Greek orator whose speech he has translated, and some of whose passages he has imitated. We refer to his energy, the *δεινότης* of the Greeks. Endowed with a tough, lignumvitæ frame, he had a mental organism equally robust; and his oratorical style is the natural outcome of his physical and mental constitution. It is not the *exercitatio domestica et umbratilis*, the silvery eloquence which is nice and dainty in its choice of words, and which appeals to the reason rather than to the feelings, but that impetuous oratory which rushes *medium in agmen, in pulverem, in clamorem, in castra, atque in aciem forensem*. There is in it a freshness and energy, a rushing force, a declamatory vehemence, which reminds one of the roar of the cataract or the dash of the torrent. In its most fiery passages, it comes down with a sustained and tremendous impetuosity, like a bombardment with red-hot shot from a whole park of artillery. His speeches have been called "law papers on fire." If the highest strength is to be found in repose, it does not belong to Brougham. Every word, look, and gesture indicate a restless, impatient en-

ergy. Martin Luther said that the reason why his composition was so boisterous and tempestuous, was, that he was "born to fight with devils and storms"; and Brougham might have made a similar explanation. Of ease and quiet he has apparently no conception.

Occasionally his vehemence of tone amounts almost to a scream. One seems to hear rough and thick hail falling and rattling on the roof as he listens to his sentences,—

"Tam multa in tectis crepitans salit horrida grando";

and the effect upon the nerves is far from pleasant. There is at times a monotony of declamation which is suggestive of the beating of a gong, or an oratorical machine; a fault which led an old English judge, who loved dawdling, and hated the "discomposing qualities" of Brougham's oratory, to call him *the Harangue*. "Well, gentlemen, what did *the Harangue* say next? Why, it said this (misstating it); but here, gentlemen, *the Harangue* was wrong, and not intelligible." But though Brougham has plenty of faults, they are the faults, not of weakness, but of power. He runs riot in the exuberance of his strength. His sentences are interminable in their length, stuffed with parentheses, and as full of folds as a sleeping boa-constrictor. He is fond of repetition and exaggeration, clothes his ideas in almost endless forms of words; crowds qualifying clauses, explanatory statements, hints, insinuations, and even distinct thoughts, into a single sentence; piles Ossa upon Pelion; accumulates image upon image, metaphor upon metaphor, argument upon argument, till the hearer, perplexed by the multiplicity of ideas, almost loses the thread of the reasoning, and is lost in the labyrinth of his periods. Occasionally, also, he is too theatrical



for good taste, as when at the close of his great speech in the House of Lords on Parliamentary Reform, sinking on the floor beside the woosack, he exclaimed: "By all you hold most dear,—by all the ties that bind every one of us to our common order and our common country, I solemnly adjure you,—I warn you,—I implore you,—yea, *on my bended knees*, I supplicate you,—reject not this bill." Passages like these, which are better adapted to Southern than to Northern latitudes, are apt to provoke a sarcasm from the cold-blooded Briton like that of Sheridan when Burke threw down a dagger on the floor of the House of Commons: "The gentleman has brought us the knife, but where is the fork?"

Again, Brougham has too great a love for big "dictionary words." He seems either to have no taste for simple, Saxon English, or to know little of its force. His style is essentially a spoken style,—better to hear than to read; and all who have heard him agree that, without hearing him, it was impossible to obtain any but a dim conception of his power. This disadvantage he shares with some of the greatest orators,—notably with Demosthenes, Chatham, and Fox. In spite of all drawbacks, however, we feel even in reading his printed speeches, that their effects must have been prodigious, especially when we remember his extraordinary elocution, and that his object was not to please, but to strike hard, to carry the object in hand, to hit the nail on the head. It is in personal encounters, in close, hand-to-hand fights with a foe, that his power is most signally displayed. "For fierce, vengeful, and irresistible assault," says John Foster, "Brougham stands the foremost man in all this world." When thus engaged, his dialectical skill, his quickness and keenness in

exposing a fallacy or crushing a weak pretense, his gall-ing irony, his flaying sarcasm, his encyclopædic knowledge, his rushing resistless declamation, his defiant courage, and his ability to wrest a weapon from the hands of an ad-versary and turn its edge upon himself,—appear to ter-rible advantage. Canning was the only member of the House who could match him on such an occasion, and some of the encounters which took place between these intellectual gladiators,—the Cœur de Lion and the Sala-din of the Senate, the one armed with a battle-axe, the other with the scimitar,—the one athletic and powerful, the other nimble, adroit, and a consummate master of fence, —were among the most exciting exhibitions of this kind ever witnessed in the British Parliament.

In speaking of Brougham's attack, Professor Goodrich remarks that "it is usually carried on under the forms of logic. For the materials of his argument, he sometimes goes off to topics the most remote and apparently alien from his subject; but he never fails to come down upon it at last with overwhelming force." He is a great mas-ter of irony and sarcasm. Though he has an abundance of wit, it never, like Canning's, takes the form of polished and sparkling pleasantry, but is steeped in scorn and con-tempt. Perhaps no orator ever lived whose invective was more terrible. The effects he produced were materi-ally increased by his looks and gestures, which were as unique and remarkable as his sentiments. As he ad-vanced in years, his face became like granite, deep in its lines, strong in its individuality, almost fierce in its power. The iron massiveness of his forehead, the long twitching nose, half-turned up and half square at its lower end, the high cheek bones, the large, restless mouth, full of

character, the eye, quick and watchful as a hawk's, the saturnine swarthy of his complexion,—arrested the attention of every observer. The impression made by his oratory was the more remarkable, as he labored under the disadvantage of an unmusical voice. In its highest tones it was often harsh and hoarse, sounding, it is said, like the scream of the northern eagle swooping down upon its prey; but this was compensated in some degree by his skill in its management, modulating it, as he did, with admirable skill.

A good specimen of Lord Brougham's manner is the close of his speech on Law Reform, in 1828:

“You saw the greatest warrior of the age,—conqueror of Italy—humbler of Germany,—terror of the North,—saw him account all his matchless victories poor compared with the triumph you are now in a condition to win,—saw him contemn the fickleness of fortune, while in despite of her he could pronounce his memorable boast: ‘I shall go down to posterity with the Code in my hand!’ You have vanquished him in the field; strive now to rival him in the sacred arts of peace! Outstrip him as lawgiver whom in arms you overcame! The lustre of the Regency will be eclipsed by the more solid and enduring splendor of the Reign. It was the boast of Augustus,—it formed part of the glare in which the perfidies of his earlier years were lost,—that he found Rome of brick and left it of marble. But how much nobler will be the Sovereign's boast, when he shall have it to say, that he found law dear and left it cheap; found it a sealed book, left it a living letter; found it the patrimony of the rich, left it the inheritance of the poor; found it the two-edged sword of craft and oppression, left it the staff of honesty and the shield of innocence!”

One of the chief merits of Brougham's oratory is its felicity in description. Having little imagination,—at least, in proportion to his other faculties,—he has no poetic passages, no meteoric images flashing across his page; his light is emphatically a “dry light”; but, so far as it goes, it is, as some one has said, like an Italian sky, in which towers, trees, temples, mountains, and stars, are defined to an almost unearthly sharpness. A striking example of his pictorial power is the passage in his speech

on the Slave Trade, in 1838, when he described the horrors of the Middle Passage, and spoke of "the shark that follows in the wake of the slave-ship," declaring that "her course is literally to be tracked through the ocean by the blood of the murdered, with which her enormous crime stains its waters." Hardly less noteworthy is the invective against the policy of Mr. Pitt, in a speech in 1812, at the Liverpool election:

"Gentlemen, I stand up in this contest against the friends and followers of Mr. Pitt, or, as they partially designate him, 'the immortal statesman,' now no more. Immortal in the miseries of his devoted country! Immortal in the wounds of her bleeding liberties! Immortal in the cruel wars which sprang from his cold, calculating ambition! Immortal in the intolerable taxes, the countless loads of debt which these wars have flung upon us,—which the youngest man among us will not live to see the end of! Immortal in the triumphs of our enemies, and the ruin of our allies,—the costly purchase of so much blood and treasure! Immortal in the afflictions of England, and the humiliations of her friends, through the whole results of his twenty years' reign, from the first rays of favor with which a delighted court gilded his early apostasy, to the deadly glare which is at this instant cast upon his name by the burning metropolis of our last ally!\* But may no such immortality ever fall to my lot,—let me rather live innocent and inglorious: and when at last I cease to serve you, and to feel for your wrongs, may I have a humble monument in some nameless stone, to tell that beneath it there rests from his labors in your service '*an enemy of the immortal statesman,—a friend of peace and of the people.*'"

It is easy to imagine the electrical effect of such declamation as the following, which breathes defiance in every word. It is from his speech in the House of Lords in 1838, on the emancipation of Negro apprentices:

"I have read with astonishment, and I repel with scorn, the insinuation that I had acted the part of an advocate, and that some of my statements were colored to serve a cause. How dares any man so to accuse me? How dares any one, skulking under a fictitious name, to launch his slanderous imputations from his covert? I come forward in my own person. I make the charge in the face of day. I drag the criminal to trial. I openly call down justice on his head. I defy his attacks. I defy his defenders. I challenge investigation. How dares any concealed adversary to charge me as an advocate speaking from a brief, and misrepresenting the facts to serve a purpose? But the absurdity of this charge even outstrips its malice."

\* The news of the burning of Moscow had reached Liverpool that very day.

The following passage from the peroration of a speech in the House of Commons, in 1830, on Negro Slavery, will recall to the reader the memorable burst of eloquence by Curran on a similar theme:

“Tell me not of rights,— talk not of the property of the planter in his slaves. I deny the right — I acknowledge not the property. The principles, the feelings of our common nature, rise in rebellion against it. Be the appeal made to the understanding or to the heart, the sentence is the same that rejects it. In vain you tell me of laws that sanction such a claim! There is a law above all the enactments of human codes,— the same throughout the world, the same in all times,— such as it was before the daring genius of Columbus pierced the night of ages, and opened to one world the sources of power, wealth, and knowledge; to another all unutterable woes; such it is at this day. It is the law written in the heart of man by the finger of his Maker; and by that law, unchangeable and eternal, while men despise fraud, and loathe rapine, and abhor blood, they will reject the wild and guilty phantasy that man can hold property in man! In vain you appeal to treaties, to covenants between nations; the covenants of the Almighty, whether of the old covenant or the new, denounce such unholy pretensions.”

That there is a dash of charlatantry in many of Brougham's displays, is doubtless true, as it is true of all such monsters of power; but as an advocate, he has, in his peculiar line, very few superiors. For a time it was a fashion with men who could not conceive of the possibility of excellence in more than one department of knowledge, to sneer at him as “no lawyer”; but the fact that, in spite of his swift dispatch of business, hardly one of his chancery decisions was reversed on appeal to the House of Lords, shows that his place in the most jealous and exacting of professions was fairly won. Less versed than many of his rivals in the technicalities of his craft, yet in quick, keen insight into the bearings of a cause, in indomitable pluck in the most adverse circumstances, in promptness in meeting a sudden emergency, in the skilful worming out of latent facts, in impromptu adroitness in veiling defective evidence with rhetorical drapery, in sarcastic irony and “damnable iteration” of invective

when required against a witness or a prosecutor, he was unsurpassed. His speech in defense of Queen Caroline, in the House of Lords, is admitted, with all its faults, to have been a masterpiece of dialectical and rhetorical skill. The rank and sex of his client, the malignant and brutal tyranny of her husband, George IV, the intense interest felt by the nation in the result, the exalted character of the tribunal, the great array of hostile talent, learning and eloquence,—all conspired, on this occasion, to call forth all the advocate's powers. We can give no analysis or extracts from this great speech, the most striking passages of which are familiar to all students of modern forensic eloquence. The power with which the evidence for the bill was shattered; the skill with which the testimony of Majocchi, the *non mi ricordo* Majocchi,—of Demont, "the Machiavel of waiting-maids," and of Cucchi, with "that unmatched physiognomy, those gloating eyes, that sniffing nose, that lecherous mouth,"—was probed, dissected, and destroyed; the defiant courage with which he pronounced the King "the ringleader of the band of perjured witnesses,"—have never been surpassed, if matched, in modern forensic oratory. Hardly inferior, perhaps fully equal, to the last-mentioned oratorical effort, was that made by Brougham in defense of Ambrose Williams. When Queen Caroline died in August, 1821, the bells in nearly all the churches of England were tolled in respect to her memory, those of Durham only remaining silent. Upon this silence, Mr. Williams, the editor of a newspaper at Durham, commented with some severity, and was thereupon indicted for a libel against "the clergy residing in and near the city of Durham." The pith of the libel was contained in the following passages:

"In this Episcopal city, containing six churches independently of the cathedral, not a single bell announced the departure of the magnanimous spirit of the most injured of Queens, the most persecuted of women. Thus the brutal enmity of those who embittered her mortal existence pursues her in her shroud. . . . We know not whether any actual orders were issued to prevent this customary sign of mourning; but the omission plainly indicates the kind of spirit which predominates among our clergy. Yet these men profess to be followers of Jesus Christ, to walk in his footsteps, to teach his precepts, to inculcate his spirit, to promote harmony, charity, and Christian love! Out upon such hypocrisy!"

The prosecution was conducted by Mr. Scarlett, who, in his opening speech contended that the silence of the bells might have been intended as a mark of respect,—that the clergy were not so loud in their grief as others, because, perhaps, they were more sincere, and sympathized too deeply with the Queen's fate to give an open expression to their sorrow. Brougham, who led the defense, saw at once the fearful blunder, and "pounced upon it as the falcon pounces upon its prey":

"That you may understand the meaning of this passage, it is necessary for me to set before you the picture my learned friend was pleased to draw of the clergy of the diocese of Durham, and I shall recall it to your minds almost in his own words. According to him they stand in a peculiarly unfortunate situation; they are, in truth, the most injured of men. They all, it seems, entertained the same generous sentiments with the rest of their countrymen, though they did not express them in the old, free, English manner, by openly condemning the proceedings against the late Queen; and after her glorious but unhappy life had closed, the venerable clergy of Durham, I am now told for the first time, though less forward in giving vent to their feelings than the rest of their fellow-citizens, though not vehement in their indignation at the matchless and unmanly persecution of the Queen, though not so unbridled in their joy at her immortal triumph, nor so loud in their lamentations over her mournful and untimely end, did, nevertheless, in reality, all the while, deeply sympathize in her sufferings, in the bottom of their reverend hearts!

When all the resources of the most ingenious cruelty hurried her to a fate without parallel, if not so clamorous, they did not feel the least of all the members of the community; their grief was in truth too deep for utterance, sorrow clung round their bosoms, weighed upon their tongues, stifled every sound; and when all the rest of mankind, of all sects and of all nations, freely gave vent to the feelings of our common nature, **THEIR** silence, the contrast which **THEY** displayed to the rest of their species, proceeded from the greater depth of their affliction; they said the less because they felt the more! Oh! talk of hypocrisy after this! Most consummate of all the hypocrites! After instructing your chosen, official advocate to stand forward with such a defence—

such an exposition of your motives—to dare utter the word hypocrisy, and complain of those who charged you with it! This is indeed to insult common sense, and outrage the feelings of the whole human race! If you were hypocrites before, you were downright, frank, honest hypocrites to what you have now made yourselves, and surely, for all you have ever done, or ever been charged with, your worst enemies must be satiated with the humiliation of this day, its just atonement, and ample retribution!”

In his opening speech Mr. Scarlett had expressed his regret that the clergy had not the power of defending themselves through the public press. To this Brougham replied that they had, in fact, largely used it, and “scurrilously and foully libelled” the defendant:

“Not that they wound deeply or injure much; but that is no fault of theirs: without hurting, they give trouble and discomfort. The insect brought into life by corruption, and nestled in filth, though its flight be lowly and its sting puny, can swarm and buzz and irritate the skin and offend the nostril, and altogether give us nearly as much annoyance as the wasp, whose nobler nature it aspires to emulate. These reverend slanderers,—these pious backbiters,—devoid of force to wield the sword, snatch the dagger; and destitute of wit to point or to barb it, and make it rankle in the wound, steep it in venom to make it fester in the scratch.”

To give an adequate account of Brougham in a few passages is like trying to compress the Amazon into a tea-cup. In one session of Parliament he made two hundred and thirty speeches, of which he says in an epitaph which he wrote upon himself,

“Here, reader, turn your weeping eyes,  
My fate a useful moral teaches;  
The hole in which my body lies,  
Would not contain one-half my speeches.”

In this, as in many other things, he was an exception to the ordinary and recognized laws of success; and, as one contemplates his marvellous and meteoric career, he is tempted, in spite of its brilliancy,—even in spite of his magnificent achievements in behalf of liberty, education, and charity,—to exclaim: “Non equidem invideo, miror magis.”



## CHAPTER X.

### POLITICAL ORATORS: IRISH.

GREATER as a thinker than Chatham or Fox, but inferior as an orator, was EDMUND BURKE, who, in the variety and extent of his powers, surpassed every other orator of ancient or modern times. He was what he called Charles Townshend, "a prodigy," and ranks not merely with the eloquent speakers of the world, but with the Bacons, Newtons, and Shakspeares. His speeches and pamphlets are saturated with thought; they absolutely swarm, like an ant-hill, with ideas, and, in their teeming profusion, remind one of the "myriad-minded" author of Hamlet. To the broadest sweep of intellect, he added the most surprising subtlety, and his almost oriental imagination was fed by a vast and varied knowledge,—the stores of a memory that held everything in its grasp. The only man who, according to Adam Smith, at once comprehended the total revolution the latter proposed in political economy, he was at the same time the best judge of a picture that Sir Joshua Reynolds ever knew; and while his knowledge was thus boundless, his vocabulary was as extensive as his knowledge. Probably no orator ever lived on whose lips language was more plastic and ductile. The materials of his style were gathered from the accumulated spoils of many tongues and of all ages; and it has been said that even the technicalities and appro-

priated phraseology of almost all sciences and arts, professions and modes of life, were familiar to him, and were ready to express in the most emphatic manner the exhaustless metaphors which his imagination supplied from these sources.

It is told among the miracles of Mahomet that he enabled his followers for days, not only to subsist, but to grow fat on the sticks and stones of the desert; and, in like manner, the imagination of Burke could find nutriment in statistics,—the veriest dry-bones of finance and fact. “It could busy itself with the fate of an empire, or with the condition of the king’s kitchen. It brought before him the Catholic who groaned in the bogs of Tipperary, and the African who rotted in the slave factories of Guinea. It entered the royal buttery, and in a moment the dry details of cooks and turnspits are wrought into a scene that might have provoked the envy of Sheridan.” A burning enthusiasm for whatever object engaged his sympathies was one of his leading qualities; and hence vehemence, passionate earnestness, and declamatory energy are among the most salient qualities of his speeches. When his passions were asleep, he was one of the most sagacious of men; but when his prejudices were roused, he “took his position like a fanatic and defended it like a philosopher.” His mind when thus excited has been compared to the Puritan regiments of Cromwell, which moved to battle with the precision of machines, while burning with the fiercest ardor of fanaticism.

Burke’s speeches abound with examples of the most solid and brilliant eloquence, argumentative, emotional, and descriptive, while they also contain a greater number of illuminative ideas,—of pointed, poignant, and poetic

sentences,—than those of any other orator. There is, indeed, hardly any species of oratorical excellence which may not be found in them in heaped profusion, and they needed only to have been less profound and reflective, and to have been delivered by a speaker with adequate physical gifts, to have produced a profound impression. Unfortunately for his influence as an orator, both his voice and his manner, his figure and his gesture, were against him. Tall, but not robust, awkward in gait and gesture; with an intellectual but severe countenance, that rarely relaxed into a smile; speaking a strong and rather ungainly Irish brogue; having a voice which was harsh when he was calm, and which, when he was excited, became often so hoarse as to be hardly intelligible; it is not wonderful that he failed to ravish his hearers, and was nicknamed "The Dinner Bell" by men who had been spell-bound by the imposing figure, the eagle eye, and the passionate oratory of Chatham. But the chief cause of their weariness was his mode of handling his subject. Instead of seizing, like Fox, on the strong points of a case, by throwing away intermediate thoughts and striking at the heart of his theme, he stopped to philosophize and to instruct his hearers, and, as Goldsmith says,

"Went on refining,  
And thought of convincing while they thought of dining."

Johnson tells us that his early speeches "filled the town with wonder"; but he adds that while none could deny that he spoke well, yet all granted that he spoke "too often and too long."

Oratory, it has been justly said, like the drama, abhors lengthiness; it abhors, too, above all things, prolonged philosophical discussion. The passions to which it appeals

must be those which all men have most in common; the arguments which it addresses to the reason must be those which can be apprehended by men of plain sense as readily as by hair-splitting casuists or deep-thinking scholars. Even beauties themselves, if they distract the attention from the main theme, become blemishes. Burke, from the very depth of his understanding, demanded too great an intellectual effort on the part of his hearers; he exacted "too great a tension of faculties little exercised by men of the world in general, not to create fatigue in an assembly which men of the world composed." As an orator, he too often forgot the great objects of oratory, *conviction and persuasion*, and failed in two things which, it has been said, are given but to few, and when given, almost always possessed alone,—fierce, nervous, overwhelming declamation, and close, rapid argument. "He can seldom confine himself," says Henry Rogers, "to a simple business-like view of the subject under discussion, or to close, rapid, compressed argumentation on it. On the contrary, he makes boundless excursions into all the regions of moral and political philosophy; is perpetually tracing up particular instances and subordinate principles to profound and comprehensive maxims; amplifying and expanding the most meagre materials into brief but comprehensive dissertations of political science, and incrusting (so to speak) the nucleus of the most insignificant fact with the most exquisite crystallizations of truth; while the whole composition glitters and sparkles again with a rich profusion of moral reflections, equally beautiful and just." His speeches were, in fact, elaborate political lectures, delivered often with the air of a pedagogue teaching his pupils. He was what Cloutz pretended to be, "the orator of the human

race," and while he could harangue *man* eloquently, **was** unskilled in the art of addressing *men*. While he **was** expatiating on themes of eternal interest, his hearers **were** absorbed in the business of the hour, and had little sympathy with that broad and high political philosophy, out of which his masculine and thoughtful eloquence sprang like the British oak from the strong black mould of ages. So unsuited to the House of Commons was his method of expounding his views, that Erskine crept under the benches to escape a speech which, when published, he thumbed to rags; and Pitt and Grenville both decided it was not worth while to answer another of his famous harangues, though Grenville afterward read it with extreme admiration, and pronounced it one of his grandest efforts.\*

A less important fault was a certain lack of refinement and delicacy of taste, which Wilkes wittily characterized when, in allusion to what was said of Apelles' Venus, that her flesh seemed as if she had fed on roses, he declared that Burke's oratory "would sometimes make one suspect that he eats potatoes and drinks whisky." In his invectives, especially, Burke often indulges in the most intemperate and grossly offensive language, which sometimes reaches such a degree of violence as to provoke a reaction in favor of his victim. In his fury against Warren Hastings, he compares him to "a sow," to "the keeper of a pigsty, wallowing in filth and corruption," and to "a rat or a weasel." "When we assimilate him to such contemptible animals, we do not mean to convey an idea of their incapa-

\* Mr. Rush, the American Minister, relates that Erskine said to him: "I was in the House when Burke made his great speech on American conciliation, — the greatest he ever made, — he drove everybody away. When I read it, I read it over and over again; I could hardly think of anything else."

bility of doing injury. When God punished Pharaoh and Egypt, it was not by armies, but by locusts and lice, which, though small and contemptible, are capable of the greatest mischiefs." In his picture of Carnot drinking the life-blood of a king, and "snorting away the fumes of indigestion" in consequence, Burke reminds one of the "scolding of the ancients."

But let us not dwell upon these exceptional passages of Burke, at which, in his cool moments, his own taste must have revolted, but pass to one of his grand outbursts, where his genius shines out in its fullest lustre. One of the finest specimens, perhaps the finest, of Burke's eloquence is the famous passage in the speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts, in which is described the descent of Hyder Ali on the Carnatic. Who that has once read it can ever forget "the black cloud" into which Hyder Ali "compounded all the materials of fury, havoc, and desolation," and "hung for awhile on the declivities of the mountains"; the "storm of universal fire that blasted" the land; the crowd of prisoners "enveloped in a whirlwind of cavalry" (an illustration like one of Lucan's, who speaks of "a storm of horse"); "the people in beggary,—a nation that stretched out its hands for food"; the absolution "of their impious vow by Hyder Ali and his yet more ferocious son"; an absolution so complete that the British army, in traversing the Carnatic for hundreds of miles, in all directions, "through the whole line of their march did not see one man, not one woman, not one child, not one four-footed beast of any description whatever"; and the climax, where the orator bids his audience figure to themselves "an equal extent of our sweet and cheerful country,—from Thames to Trent north

and south, and from the Irish to the German sea east and west,—emptied and emboweled (may God avert the omen of our crimes!) by so accomplished a desolation?" The best proof of the intense vividness and power of this passage, is the fact that, hackneyed as it is, and worn to shreds by schoolboy declamation, no person of taste and sensibility can read it, or hear it, for the hundredth or five hundredth time, without a tingling of the blood in every vein.

It would be difficult to name a more striking example of the force of what may be called classical prejudice than Lord Brougham's comments on this memorable passage. Contrasting with it the description by Demosthenes of the terror and confusion at Athens, when the news arrived that Elateia had been seized by Philip of Macedon, and when, amid the general silence that followed the proclamation of the herald, Demosthenes arose, and suggested measures that caused all the dangers to pass away *ὡσπερ νέφος*, "like a cloud," Lord Brougham says: "Demosthenes uses but a single word, and the work is done." True; but *what* is the work that is done? Is there a tyro in public speaking who could not compare the passing away of a great danger to the passing away of a cloud? It is the prerogative of genius to take an old image or metaphor, from which all the beauty and vividness have faded, and, by a few original touches, give it a new brilliancy and effect. In the present case Burke has taken a hackneyed, worn-out figure, and, by expansion and elaboration, has transformed it into one of the most picturesque images in modern oratory. Again, Lord Brougham, somewhat hypercritically, objects to the confusion in Burke's imagery because he compares Hyder Ali's army

first to "a black cloud," then to a "meteor," then to a "tempest." To the hearers of the speech, however, we have no doubt that this very variation of the imagery, at which a pedagogue would carp, served only to heighten the vividness and effect of the picture of the terrible warrior and his host advancing from the menacing encampment on the mountain to the massacre on the plain. So, again, the secondary touches which fill up the picture, such as the "blackening of all the horizon," the "goading spears of the drivers," and "the trampling of pursuing horses," instead of diminishing the effect, as his Lordship contends, serve, we think, to swell the fearful grandeur of the tempest which poured over the plains of the Carnatic. A juster criticism is that of other writers, who complain of the visual inaccuracy of a "meteor, *blackening* all the horizon," and that the first two sentences of the passage lack simplicity and directness, being too much clogged with qualifying thoughts.

Of none of the great orators of Great Britain is it more difficult at this day to form a just opinion than of that versatile genius, RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN, of whom Byron sang,

"Nature formed but one such man,  
And broke the die in moulding Sheridan."

There are acute critics who even deny that he was a great orator. His taste, they declare, was radically vicious. His sentiments were clap-trap; his rhetoric florid, if not bombastic; the apostrophes and the invocations which so dazzled his hearers, were only fit to be addressed to the galleries by some hero of a melodrama. He was not an eagle

"Sailing in supreme dominion  
Through the azure deep of air,"



but only a kite, with a keen eye and heavy body, laboriously beating his way through the reluctant ether. De Quincey does not hesitate to pronounce him an absolute charlatan; he was a mocking-bird, he says, through the entire scale, from the highest to the lowest note of the gamut,—in fact, the mere impersonation of humbug. “Of Goldsmith it was said in his epitaph, *Nil tetigit quod non ornavit*; of the Drury-Lane rhetorician it might be said with equal truth, *Nil tetigit quod non fuco adulteravit*.” There is, ~~no doubt, some~~ ground for these accusations, but the question is not whether Sheridan was an original thinker, or whether he did not sometimes sin against a fastidious taste, but how did he affect those who listened to him? Was he, or was he not, a formidable adversary in debate? Did he, or did he not, stir up the souls of his hearers from their innermost depths? Did he, or did he not, charm, convince, and persuade his auditors? This is the only true criterion of oratory, the great end of which, it must be remembered, is to persuade, and by ~~carrying captive the passions, to attack through them the~~ <sup>and</sup> citadel of reason. Tried by this test, Sheridan, ~~we think,~~ <sup>by</sup> must be pronounced a great orator.

To begin with, he had naturally many of the elements of a first-rate speaker. He had a pleasing countenance, a <sup>eloquent</sup> voice with mellifluous tones and of considerable depth and compass, a rare versatility of talents, a knowledge of the human heart and the way to touch its chords, an abundance of self-assurance, and a temper which defied every attempt to ruffle it. His manner was theatrical, but full of life and energy. He delighted especially in antithesis, apostrophes, and rhetorical exaggeration. Habitually indolent, destitute of profound political knowledge, incapable of projecting

great measures, he yet became one of the champions of his party, and was more feared by his adversaries than were leaders who had far greater knowledge and abilities. Good sense and wit, we are told, were the ordinary weapons of his oratory; it was hard to say in which he excelled, the instinctive insight with which he detected the weak points of an adversary, or the inimitable raillery with which he exposed them. "He wounded deepest," says Wraxall, "when he smiled, and convulsed his hearers with laughter, while the object of his ridicule or animadversion was twisting under the lash." When Pitt, still a young man, stung by his witticisms, undertook in that vein of arrogant sarcasm for which he was afterward so noted, to crush him by a contemptuous allusion to his theatrical pursuits, he was met with a quick and sharp rebuke: "Flattered and encouraged by the right honorable gentleman's panegyric on my talents, if I ever again engage in the composition he alludes to, I may be tempted to an act of presumption, and attempt an improvement on one of Ben Jonson's best characters, that of the *Angry Boy*, in 'The Alchymist.'" When urged to speak on topics which exacted extensive knowledge, or an appeal to authorities, he would frankly say: "You know I am an ignoramus; but here I am,—instruct me, and I'll do my best." Few persons could have acquitted themselves creditably under such disadvantages; yet such was the quickness and penetration of his intellect, that he was able speedily to master the information they provided, and to pour it forth with a freshness and vivacity that seemed like the results of long familiarity rather than of impromptu acquisition.

During the first seven years in Parliament, Sheridan gave no signal exhibition of his powers as an orator.

His short, sharp attacks on Pitt and Rigby, and occasional bursts of remonstrance against the Tory measures, gave some idea of his mettle; but he did nothing to stamp him as "the worthy rival of the wondrous Three," till he took part in the impeachment of Warren Hastings. Fortunately for the display of his genius, he was assigned the charge relating to the Begums,—a topic which gave full scope for the exertion of his peculiar powers. On this charge he delivered two speeches,—one in the House of Commons, the other soon after in Westminster Hall. Of the first of these eagle-flights of full-grown genius, which occupied five hours and a half, no adequate record has been preserved. It is enough to say that it was, by universal confession, one of the most dazzling and powerful efforts of oratory in modern times. Men of all parties vied with each other in their praise. "One heard everybody in the street," says Walpole, "raving on the wonders of that speech." He adds that there must be a witchery in its author; who had no diamonds, as Hastings had, to win favor with, and that the Opposition may fairly be charged with sorcery. Fox, a severe judge, declared that "all that he ever heard, all that he had ever read, when compared with it, dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapor before the sun." Burke, Pitt, Windham and Wilberforce, agreed in placing it above all other, even the most wonderful, performances of ancient or modern times. Within twenty-four hours from its delivery, Sheridan was offered a thousand pounds for the copyright, if he could correct it for the press. This he never did, and in the outline that has come down to us we have but a faint adumbration of the speech. A signal proof of its power, was that the House deemed it necessary to adjourn,

to give the astonished audience time "to collect its reason," and recover from the dazzling enchantments and the excitements it had undergone. One member declared that "nothing, indeed, but information almost equal to a miracle could determine him to vote for the charge; but he had *just felt the influence of such a miracle*, and he could not but ardently desire to avoid an immediate decision."

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But the highest testimony<sup>of the assembly</sup> was that of Logan, the defender of Hastings. After Sheridan had spoken an hour, Logan said to a friend: "All this is declamatory assertion without proof." Another hour passed, and he muttered: "This is a most wonderful oration." A third, and he confessed: "Mr. Hastings has acted very unjustifiably." At the end of the fourth, he exclaimed: "Mr. Hastings is a most atrocious criminal." At last, before the speech was concluded, he vehemently protested: "Of all monsters of iniquity, the most enormous is Warren Hastings!" At a later day Byron, in his "Monody," with pardonable poetical exaggeration, sang:

"When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan  
Arose to heaven in her appeal to man,  
His was the thunder, his the avenging rod,  
The wrath, the delegated voice of God,  
Which shook the nations through his lips, and blazed  
Till vanquished senates trembled as they praised."

Among the epigrammatic parts of the speech, one of the most notable is the denunciation of the sordid spirit of trade which characterized the operations of the East-India Company as a government:

"There was something in the frame and constitution of the Company which extended the sordid principles of their origin over all their successive operations, connecting with their civil policy, and even with their boldest achievements, the meanness of a pedler and the profligacy of pirates. Alike in the political and the military line could be observed auctioneering ambassadors and trading generals; and thus we saw a revolution brought about by *affidavits*; an army employed in *executing an arrest*; a town besieged on a *note of hand*;

a prince dethroned for the *balance of an account*. Thus it was that they exhibited a government which united the mock majesty of a bloody sceptre and the little traffic of a merchant's counting-house, wielding a truncheon in one hand and picking a pocket with the other."

An acute writer has well observed that there is a singular felicity in the skill with which the speaker here drags down the governor of a vast empire to the level of the common herd of profligates and criminals by connecting his greatest acts with the same motives which influence the pick-pocket and the cut-throat. "By bringing the large conceptions and benevolent aims which should characterize a ruler of nations into startling contrast with the small personal aims which animate the heroes of Hounslow Heath, he had an opportunity to play the dazzling fence of his wit with the most brilliant effect." \*

When the Commons had voted to impeach Hastings, Sheridan, as one of the managers, delivered before a more august assembly another oration on the subject of his former masterpiece,—viz. the defendant's ill-treatment of the Benares rajah and the Oude princesses. The proceedings opened in Westminster Hall, the noblest room in England, on the 13th of February, 1788. The Queen and four of her daughters were present, and the Prince of Wales walked in at the head of a hundred and fifty peers of the realm. Never, perhaps, was public expectation, on such an occasion, wrought to a higher pitch. So great was the eagerness to obtain seats, that fifty guineas were paid for a single ticket. For four days <sup>all of England</sup> the <sup>great, noble,</sup> and beautiful of the land hung on the eloquence which Sheridan's former great effort had not exhausted; and though his oration was disfigured by many extravagances and meretricious ornaments, and was certainly inferior to

\* "Essays and Reviews," by Edwin P. Whipple.

that in the House of Commons, yet all agreed in pronouncing it a speech of prodigious power. <sup>294</sup> (Burke went so far as to say that, from poetry up to eloquence, there was not a species of composition of which a complete and perfect specimen might not be culled from it. In reading the verbatim report of the speech, in cold blood, to-day, we find little to justify the homage which it received on its delivery; but the same observation, as we have already seen, may be made of many of the most eloquent speeches that have ever thrilled an assembly. Half of the power of eloquence, it must be remembered, consists in its adaptation to the time, place, and audience. Even the great Oration for the Crown, the mightiest display of eloquence known in the annals of mankind, fails to awaken to-day in the soul of the reader the sentiments of enthusiasm and intense admiration to which it gave birth in the Athenian Agora.

Sheridan's greatest defect as an orator was, apparently, his lack of deep convictions. Without these a commanding eloquence is impossible. On the trial he was wrought up to an unusual pitch of feeling; but commonly he was best fitted for what has been called the Comedy of Debate. Often when his associates failed with their heavy guns to demolish the enemy's works, his lighter artillery played upon them with telling effect. Overwhelming his adversaries with ridicule, he was equally successful in defending himself from their shafts. When Mr. Law, the counsel for Hastings, ridiculed one of his forced and tumid metaphors, he replied: "It is the first time in my life that I have ever heard of special pleading on a metaphor, or a bill of indictment against a trope. But such was the turn of the learned counsel's mind, that, when he at-

tempted to be humorous, no jest could be found, and when serious, no fact was visible." Sheridan's excellence in all the departments of oratory, except perhaps the strictly argumentative, reminds one of an ancient pentathlete. Inferior to Pitt in dignity of manner, to Fox in argument and vehemence, and to Burke in imagination, depth, and comprehensiveness of thought, he was listened to with more delight than any one of them. Burke, in spite of his gorgeous periods, was often coughed down; Pitt wearied his hearers by his starch and mannerisms, and Fox tired them by his repetitions; ~~but~~ Sheridan "won his way by a sort of fascination." When he arose to speak, a low murmur of eagerness ran round the House; every word was watched for, ~~and his pleasantry set the whole House~~ in a roar. In the social circle he was equally bewitching. Byron, who declared that his talk was "superb"; Fox, who pronounced him the wittiest man he had ever met with; and Moore, his biographer, have all testified to the brilliancy of his conversation, though none of them have deemed it possible to do justice by any description to these quick flashes of repartee, ~~that~~ <sup>with</sup> rolling fire of light raillery, ~~the~~ <sup>fresh</sup> sharp volleys of vivid satire, ~~and with~~ the dropping flight of epigrams, for which he was so famed. The latter ~~writer has happily portrayed him as~~ <sup>epigram has been portrayed by his</sup> Moore <sup>as</sup>

"The orator, dramatist, minstrel, who ran  
Through each mode of the lyre, and was master of all;  
Whose mind was an essence compounded with art  
From the finest and best of all other men's powers;  
Who ruled like a wizard the world of the heart,  
And could call up its sunshine or bring down its showers."

Probably no orator ever bestowed more labor upon the preparation of his speeches, even to the pettiest details, than Sheridan. He never, ~~says his biographer,~~ made a

speech of any moment, of which a sketch was not found in his papers, with the showy parts written two or three times over. His memoranda show that the minutest points had been carefully considered, even to marking the exact place in which his apparently involuntary exclamation, "Good God! Mr. Speaker," was to be introduced, and the occasions on which he was to be hurried into impromptu bursts of passion. Even his wit, so brilliant and sparkling, was carefully conned and learned by rote. Whole mornings were secretly given to it, which were supposed to be spent in the indolent sleep of fashion, and many of his happiest "improvisations" were jests that had been kept in pickle for months. Noting down his best thoughts in a memorandum-book, as they occurred to him, he had always at hand some felicities to weave into a conversation or speech. Some of these absolutely haunted him, and nothing can be more amusing than to note the various forms through which some of his sarcastic pleasant-ries passed from their first germ to "the bright, consummate flower" which he gave to the public. It was in allusion to this practice of preparing and polishing his jests, and waiting for an opportunity to fire them off,—of creating an opportunity when it was slow to come,—that Pitt taunted him with his "hoarded repartees and matured jests."

Of these elaborated impromptus the following is an example. In his commonplace book he speaks of a person "who employs his fancy in his narrative, and keeps his recollections for his wit." This was afterward expanded into the following: "When he makes his jokes, you applaud the accuracy of his memory, and it is only when he states his facts that you admire the flights of his im-



agination." But so sparkling a jest was not to be hidden in the pages of a note-book; so it was fired off at a composer of music who had turned wine-merchant: "You will import your music, and compose your wine." Even this use of the thought did not satisfy Sheridan, while its capabilities of application were still unexhausted; and so it was fired off in a seemingly careless parenthesis, in a speech in reply to Dundas, "a right honorable gentleman who generally resorts to his memory for his jokes, and to his imagination for his facts." Again, Sheridan was greatly pleased, apparently, with a metaphor he had drawn from the terms of military science. "A true trained wit," he says, "lays his plan like a general,—foresees the circumstances of the conversation,—surveys the ground and contingences,—and detaches a person to draw you into the palpable ambushade of his ready-made joke." This idea next appears in a sketch of a lady who affects poetry: "I made regular approaches to her by sonnets and rebuses,—a rondeau of circumvallation,—her pride sapped by an elegy, and her reserve surprised by an impromptu; proceeding to storm with Pindarics, she at last saved the further effusion of ink by a capitulation." Most wits would have been satisfied with these triumphs; but Sheridan cannot abandon the witticism till he has shot it forth in a more elaborate and polished form in the House of Commons. The Duke of Richmond having introduced, in the session of 1786, a plan for the fortification of dock-yards, Sheridan complimented him on his genius as an engineer in the following mocking strain: "He had made his Report an argument of posts, and conducted his reasoning upon principles of trigonometry as well as logic. There were certain detached data, like advanced works,

to keep the enemy at a distance from the main objects in debate. Strong provisions covered the flanks of his assertions. His very queries were in casements. No impression, therefore, was to be made on this fortress of sophistry by desultory observations; and it was necessary to sit down before it, and assail it by regular approaches. It was fortunate, however, to observe, that notwithstanding all the skill employed by the noble and literary engineer, his mode of defense on paper was open to the same objections which had been urged against his other fortifications, that if his adversary got possession of one of his posts, it became strength against him, and the means of subduing the whole line of his arguments.\*

It was unfortunate for Sheridan's reputation as an orator that he was the son of a player, a dramatist, and

\* Because Sheridan thus prepared many of his brilliant sallies, it has been the fashion to scoff at his genius, and to infer that he was incapable of improvising a splendid burst of eloquence or a sparkling witticism. The fact is, that nearly all great speakers have elaborated their finest passages, but, luckily, they have not all, like Sheridan, had biographers who have revealed "the secrets of the shop." A sensible writer says truly that most men of genius spend half of their time in day-dreaming about the art or subject in which they are interested or excel. The painter is peopling space with the forms that are to breathe on canvas; the poet is murmuring the words that are to burn along his lines; and the wit who is welcomed at rich men's feasts, is constantly turning over his jests in his memory, to see what form of expression will give them the most piquancy and point. There is no objection to the use of the utmost art in the preparation of important passages in a speech, if only the art is not apparent. It is well known that it was in fishing for trout in Marshfield, that Webster (who "in bait and debate was equally persuasive") composed the famous passage on the surviving veterans of the battle for his first Bunker Hill address. "He would pull out a lusty specimen," says Starr King; "shouting 'venerable men, you have come down to us from a former generation. Heaven has bounteously lengthened out your lives, that you might behold this joyous day.' He would unhook them into his basket, declaiming, 'You are gathered to your fathers, and live only to your country in her grateful remembrance and your own bright example.' In his boat, fishing for a cod, he composed or rehearsed the passage in it on Lafayette, when he hooked a very large cod, and, as he pulled his nose above water, exclaimed, 'Welcome! all hail! and thrice welcome, citizen of two hemispheres.'"

the manager of a theatre. ~~That~~ his critics have consequently looked upon him as an actor, <sup>and a</sup> ~~not to say a~~ <sup>pretentious</sup> charlatan and a trickster, — cannot be doubted. How much of his careless, procrastinating way sprang from natural tendencies, and how much from a secret love of display and startling surprises, it is hard to say. Though he hated all needless and much needed labor, he could yet toil terribly for special ends. His practice in great emergencies, was “to rise at four in the morning, light up a prodigious quantity of candles around him, and eat toasted muffins while he worked.” When, during the trial of Hastings, he was called on to reply to Mr. Law, and was asked by a brother manager for his bag and papers, he answered that he had none, but would get through his speech by hook or crook without them. “He would abuse Mr. Law, ridicule Plumer’s long orations, make the court laugh, please the women, and get triumphantly through the whole.” As he went on, the Lord Chancellor again insisted on the reading of the minutes; and Fox, alarmed lest the lack of them should ruin the speech, inquired anxiously for the bag. “The man *has* no bag,” whispered Taylor. The whole scene, Moore says, was a contrivance of Sheridan to astonish his hearers by his ability to make a speech without materials, since he had shut himself up for several days at Wanstead to elaborate this very oration, and read and wrote so hard that he complained at evening that he had motes before his eyes. “It was the fate of Mr. Sheridan throughout life,” ~~says~~ <sup>says</sup> his biographer, “and in a great degree his policy, to gain credit for excessive indolence and carelessness, while few persons, with so much natural brilliancy of talents, ever employed more art and circumspection in their display.”

In the very front rank of the many brilliant orators whom Ireland has produced stands HENRY GRATTAN. In his earliest youth he showed a remarkable taste for oratory, and he began to cultivate it almost as soon as he left college. Adopting Bolingbroke and Junius as his models, he committed certain passages of his speeches to memory, and, revolving them continually in his mind till he had weeded out every needless word, he brought his sentences at last to a degree of nervousness, polish, and condensation, that has hardly a parallel in oratory. While reading law in London, he fell under the spell of Chatham's eloquence, and from that moment everything else was forgotten in the one great aim of cultivating his powers as a public speaker. Among the means he adopted was that of declaiming in private, of which practice some amusing anecdotes are preserved. It is said that his landlady in London wrote to his friends requesting that he should be removed, as he was always pacing her garden, and addressing some person whom he called "Mr. Speaker," which led her to doubt the sanity of her lodger. It is stated, also, that in one of his moonlight rambles in Windsor Forest, he stopped at a gibbet, and began apostrophizing its chains in his usual impassioned strain, when he was suddenly tapped on the shoulder by a prosaic person, who inquired, "How the devil did you get down?" About this time he took also a prominent part in private theatricals; but, owing to his vehemence and abruptness of manner, his awkwardness and redundancy of gesture, and the lack of modulation in his voice, he met with but moderate success.

In hardly one of Grattan's qualities as an actor was there a prophecy of his future greatness as an orator;

and it is said that in the mechanical parts of public speaking he was always deficient. Laboring under many physical and intellectual disadvantages; short in stature and unprepossessing in appearance; almost sweeping the ground with his gestures, so that the motion of his long arms was compared to the rolling of a ship in a heavy swell; adding, at the beginning of his speeches, to his awkwardness and grotesqueness of manner a hesitating tone and a drawling emphasis; gifted by nature with little wit or pathos, and no pleasantry; he, nevertheless, became one of the greatest masters of oratory within the walls of St. Stephen. While he was inferior to several of his great contemporaries as a mere debater, he combined two of the highest qualities of an orator to a degree that was almost unexampled. "No British orator," says Mr. Lecky, "except Chatham, had an equal power of firing an educated audience with an intense enthusiasm, or of animating and inspiring a nation. No British orator except Burke had an equal power of sowing his speeches with profound aphorisms and associating transient questions with eternal truths. His thoughts naturally crystallized into epigrams; his arguments were condensed with such admirable force and clearness that they assumed almost the appearance of axioms; and they were often interspersed with sentences of concentrated poetic beauty, which flashed upon the audience with all the force of sudden inspiration, and which were long remembered and repeated." His element, in the opinion of another critic, who often heard him in Parliament, was grandeur. As it was said of Michael Angelo that there was life in every touch of his chisel, and that he struck out forms and features from the marble with the power of a creator, so it might be said of Grat-

tan, that there was nothing mean or commonplace in his thoughts or images, but everything came fresh from his mind with the energy and vividness of a new creation. He had the power of investing the humblest themes with a sudden magnitude, and even the grievances of a casual impost, the delinquencies of the police, the artifices of an election, or the formalities of a measure of finance, became under his hand historic subjects, and were associated with recollections of intellectual triumph.

In the invention, choice, and arrangement of arguments, he shows an originality, sagacity, and copiousness equal to those of any other British speaker; but his chief aim is not so much to conduct his hearers through long trains of reasoning, as to give them the concrete results of reason itself,—not to lead their minds to the understanding of a question by the labyrinth of a slow, tedious logical process, but by a single flash to fill them with illuminative conviction. It is this brilliant impassioned ardor, this impetuous movement, which preëminently distinguishes the oratory of Grattan, and impresses the reader of his speeches even more, perhaps, than his profound knowledge, his wisdom, his consummate art, his beautiful imagery, and his exquisite diction, which we know not for what quality most to admire,—for its force, eloquence, and precision, or for that wondrous dithyrambic melody, that exquisite music of cadence, in which Grattan stands among all orators supreme. The blaze, the rapidity, the penetration of Grattan's oratory, struck all who heard him. He poured out his arguments like a shower of arrows, but they were arrows tipped with fire. He was unmatched in crushing invective, in delineations of character, in terse, luminous statement; he delighted in severe, concentrated ar-

gument, in biting sarcasm, and in flashing his ideas on the mind with a sudden, startling abruptness. In many of his sentences there is a condensed energy of expression which almost equals that of Tacitus. What an amount of feeling is conveyed in that sentence so famous for its touching and concentrated beauty, in which he speaks of his efforts to establish the freedom of the Irish Parliament, and says: "I watched by its cradle; I followed its hearse!"\*

Grattan, unlike nearly all other orators, seemed to have before him two distinct classes of hearers when he spoke, — the audience he addressed, and a more enlightened auditory of the thoughtful few who could appreciate the highest excellences of oratory. He spoke so as to convince and charm his hearers, and at the same time to instruct future generations. His chief faults were his intense mannerism, his occasional incongruity of metaphor, and his excess of epigram and antithesis. Occasionally, though rarely, he was obscure, in allusion to which, and to his rapid force and brilliancy, his eloquence has been picturesquely characterized as "a combination of cloud, whirlwind, and flame." The rhythmus of his sentences, to whose exceeding beauty we have already alluded, must have been studied with great care. What can be finer than the close of his great speech in 1780, on moving a declaration of Irish right: "I have no ambition, unless it be to break your chain, and to contemplate your glory. I will never be satisfied so long as the meanest cottager in Ireland has a link of the British chain clanking to his

\* In allusion to this passage, O'Connell, at a later day, proudly said: "Grattan sat by the cradle of his country, and followed her hearse: it was left for me to sound the resurrection trumpet, and to show that she was not dead, but sleeping."

rag. He may be naked, he shall not be in irons. And I do see the time at hand; the spirit has gone forth; the Declaration of Right is planted; and though great men should fall off, yet the cause shall live; and though the public speaker should die, yet the immortal fire shall outlast the humble organ who conveys it, and the breath of liberty, like the word of the holy man, will not die with the prophet, but will survive him." The speech from which this peroration is taken is perhaps the finest effort of Grattan's genius. Nothing equal to it had ever before been heard in Ireland, nor was its superior probably ever delivered within the English House of Commons. Other speeches on the same subject may have matched it in argument and information; but in startling energy and splendor of style it surpassed them all. Grattan did not merely convince his countrymen, but he dazzled and inflamed them; he raised the question of Irish freedom into a loftier region of thought and sentiment than it had ever before occupied; and we are not surprised to learn that he became from that hour the idol of his countrymen, and was looked upon as the prophet of Irish Redemption.

In his speech on the Downfall of Bonaparte, he characterizes Burke as "the prodigy of nature and of acquisition. He read everything, he saw everything, he foresaw everything." Of Fox he says: "To do justice to that immortal person, you must not limit your view to this country; his genius was not confined to England, it acted three hundred miles off in breaking the chains of Ireland; it was seen three thousand miles off in communicating freedom to the Americans; it was visible I know not how far off in ameliorating the condition of



the Indian; it was discernible on the coast of Africa in accomplishing the abolition of the slave-trade. *You are to measure the magnitude of his mind by parallels of latitude.*" In the same speech he denounces the tyranny of Napoleon as "an experiment to universalize throughout Europe the dominion of the sword; to relax the moral and religious influences; to set heaven and earth adrift from one another; and *make God Almighty a tolerated alien in his own creation.*" Warning England not to desert her allies, he says: "In vain have you stopped in your own person the flying fortunes of Europe; in vain have you taken the eagle of Napoleon, and *snatched invincibility from his standard*, if now, when confederated Europe is ready to march, you take the lead in the desertion, and preach the penitence of Napoleon and the poverty of England."

One of Grattan's most electric speeches was delivered when he was prostrated with disease, and so feeble that he could not walk without help. It is in this speech that occurs the memorable passage: "Yet I do not give up my country. I see her in a swoon, but she is not dead. Though in her tomb she lies helpless and motionless, still there is on her lips a spirit of life, and on her cheek a glow of beauty:

"Thou art not conquered: beauty's ensign yet  
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,  
And death's pale flag is not advanced there."

Grattan was preëminently a born orator. Eloquence with him was not simply a means to an end, an instrument to gain power; it was his native element, a necessity of his existence. It has been said that if he had been born among the backwoodsmen, he would have been an

orator, and would have roused the men of the hatchet and the rifle. Wherever the tongue of man could have won influence, or impassioned and brilliant appeals could have given pleasure, he would have been listened to with admiration and delight. If he had not found an audience, he would have addressed the torrents and the trees; he would have sent forth his voice to the inaccessible mountains, and appealed to the inscrutable stars.

Among the popular orators of Europe it would be impossible to name another who ruled the stormy passions of the mob with so absolute a sway as was exercised by that giant and athlete of the tribune, DANIEL O'CONNELL. He won his first laurels as an advocate, and rose swiftly to the highest rank in the profession. In managing a cause, vigilance and caution were his leading characteristics. Naturally impulsive, he affected to be careless; yet a more wary advocate, or one more jealously watchful of his client's interests, never scanned the looks of a jury. No great lawyer, it is said, ever had a truer relish for the legal profession: he had the eye of a lynx and the scent of a hound to detect a legal flaw, and hunted down a cause with all the gusto of a Kerry fox-hunter in pursuit of a reynard. Undiverted from attention to his duties by the temptations of idleness or pleasure, O'Connell never failed to be prepared for the important moment of trial, with all the restless power which a strong mind and a life of industry bestow. Few were so intimately acquainted with the Irish character, and while he keenly enjoyed baffling the counsel for the prosecution, and bullying or perplexing the witnesses against the trembling culprit in the dock, he was rarely defeated by the skill of an ad-

versary, or the stubbornness or cunning of a witness. In the criminal cases he played the part of an indignant lawyer to perfection; caught up his brief-bag in a seeming fury, and dashed it against the witness-table,—frowned,—muttered fearfully to himself,—sat down in a rage, with a horrid scowl on his face; bounced up again, in a fit of boiling passion, and solemnly protested in the face of heaven against such injustice,—threw his brief away,—swaggered out of the court-house,—then swaggered back again, and wound up by brow-beating and abusing half-a-dozen more witnesses, and, without any real grounds whatever, finally succeeded in making half of the jury refuse to bring in a verdict of “Guilty.”

In civil causes, also, O'Connell stood at the head of the *nisi prius* lawyers. In case of legacies, disputed estates, and questions springing out of family quarrels, he is reported to have been unrivalled for his tact, shrewdness, presence of mind, and especially for understanding the details of business. “He was not the match of Wallace,” says a writer, “in showing the cogency of an inapplicable reason; he was not so acute as O'Grady in piercing to the core of a refractory witness, and detecting perjury or fraud; he was not so shrewd as Pennefather in puzzling the judges upon some subtle point, which had been raked from the dusty folios of technical perplexity, or hit upon by long and abstruse speculation; he had not the unimpassioned but graceful eloquence of North, pouring upon the ear like moonlight upon a marble statue; but he exhibited in an eminent degree the characteristic excellences of them all.” He had a profound knowledge of human nature, and penetrated the motives of a plaintiff or defendant with matchless skill. His stores of world-

ly knowledge and legal lore, his keenness and ingenuity, his off-hand Irish readiness, his abundant subtlety in the invention of topics to meet an adversary's arguments, united to a penetration that never left one point of his own case unexplored,—his jolly temper and good-natured humor,—his biting ridicule and vehement eloquence,—all together rendered him absolutely matchless at the Irish bar.

O'Connell's mind was rather strong and fiery than polished and delicate. He was not a classical speaker, and his knowledge of literature was apparently small. There was, at times, a degree of coarseness in his harangues; and he had, indeed, one of the most venomously sarcastic tongues ever put into the head of man. He used to say that he was the best abused man in all Europe. But, whoever abused him, he knew how to repay all such scores with most usurious interest. He could pound an antagonist with denunciation, riddle him with invective, or roast him alive before a slow fire of sarcasm. A good illustration of his style of attack is furnished by the furious altercation between him and Disraeli, when the latter turned Tory, and was pronounced by O'Connell as one "who, if his genealogy could be traced, would be found to be the lineal descendant and true heir-at-law of the impenitent thief who atoned for his crimes upon the cross,"—a touch of genius worthy of Swift or Byron. Probably no sarcasm of Disraeli ever made an enemy writhe with a tithe of the anguish which he himself suffered from this, which went like a poisoned arrow to the mark, and rankled like a barbed one. In nick-names, O'Connell was especially happy, as in his "Scorpion Stanley" and "Spinning-jenny Peel." The smile of the latter, he said, was "like the silver plate on a coffin."

As a popular orator before a miscellaneous audience, O'Connell had few equals. John Randolph, who had good opportunities of forming a judgment, pronounced him the first orator in Europe. Every chord of the "harp of a thousand strings" lay open to his touch, and he played upon it with a master's hand. His voice, which Disraeli admitted to have been the finest ever heard in Parliament, was deep, sonorous, distinct, and flexible. In its transitions from the higher to the lower notes, it was wondrously effective. All who heard him were enchanted by its swelling and sinking waves of sound, its quiet and soft cadences of beauty, alternated with bass notes of grandeur; and even its "divinely-managed brogue" added not a little to its charm, especially when he indulged in sparkles of

"Easy humor, blossoming  
Like the thousand flowers of spring."

One of the most marked traits of his oratory, was its utter self-abnegation. He had no rhetorical trickery; he never strove, like his contemporary, Sheil, to strike and dazzle,—to create a sensation and be admired. Of the thousands and tens of thousands who heard him, whether thundering in the Senate or haranguing the multitude on his route from his coach-roof, not one person probably ever dreamed that a sentence of that flowing stream of words had been pre-studied. His bursts of passion displayed that freshness and genuineness which art can so seldom counterfeit. "The listener," says Mr. Lecky, "seemed almost to follow the workings of his mind,—to perceive him hewing his thoughts into rhetoric with a negligent but colossal grandeur; with the chisel, not of a Canova, but of a Michael Angelo."

There was no chord of feeling that he could not strike

with power. Melting his hearers at one moment by his pathos, he convulsed them at the next by his humor; bearing them in one part of his speech to a dizzy height on the elastic wing of his imagination, in another he would make captive their judgments by the iron links of his logic. No actor on the stage surpassed him in revealing the workings of the mind through the windows of the face. Not the tongue only, but the whole countenance spoke; he looked every sentiment as it fell from his lips. "He could whine and wheedle, and wink with one eye, while he wept with the other." It is said that on one occasion a deputation of Hindoo chiefs, while listening to his recital before an assembly of the wrongs of India, never took their eyes off him for an hour and a half, though not one word in ten was intelligible to their ears. His gesticulation, says an intelligent American writer, who heard him when at the height of his fame, "was redundant, never commonplace, strictly *sui generis*, far from being awkward, not precisely graceful, and yet it could hardly have been more forcible, and, so to speak, illustrative. He threw himself into a great variety of attitudes, all evidently unpremeditated. Now he stands bolt upright, like a grenadier. Then he assumes the port and bearing of a pugilist. Now he folds his arms upon his breast, utters some beautiful sentiment, relaxes them, recedes a step, and gives wing to the coruscations of his fancy, while a winning smile plays over his countenance. Then he stands at ease, and relates an anecdote with the rollicking air of a horse-jockey at Donnybrook fair. Quick as thought, his indignation is kindled, and, before speaking a word, he makes a violent sweep with his arm, seizes his wig as if he would tear it in pieces,

adjusts it to its place, throws his body into the attitude of a gladiator, and pours out a flood of rebuke and denunciation."

In person, O'Connell had many of the qualifications of an orator, his appearance corresponding to his mind. He was tall and muscular, with a broad chest, and Herculean shoulders as extensive as the burden he had to bear. From his strong and homely look, and his careless and independent swing as he walked along, he might have been taken for a plain, wealthy farmer, had not his face been occasionally enlivened by an eye of fire. In private life he was enthusiastically admired. Warm and generous in his feelings, cordial and frank in his manners, loving a good joke, having an exhaustless supply of wit and humor, he was every way so fascinating in manners, that even the veriest Orangeman who had drunk knee-deep to the "Glorious Memory," and strained his throat in giving "one cheer more" for Protestant ascendancy, could not sit ten minutes by the side of the "Great Agitator" without being charmed into the confession that no man was ever better fitted to win and hold the hearts of his countrymen. He was a born king among his fellow-men,—so truly such, that even his faults and errors had a princely air. His early excesses and sins were royal in their extravagance. His highest glory is, that, though not a statesman, he was a daring and successful political agitator; that he revolutionized the whole social system of Ireland, and remodelled by his influence its representative, ecclesiastical and educational institutions; that, if he indulged sometimes in ribaldry and vulgar abuse, his fury was poured out upon meanness, injustice, and oppression; that he championed the cause of human-

ity without regard to clime, color, or condition; and that wherever the moan of the oppressed was heard, there, too, was heard the trumpet-voice of O'Connell, rousing the sympathies of mankind, rebuking the tyrant, and cheering the victim.

Lack of space forbids us from attempting to portray the oratory of RICHARD LALOR SHEIL, so utterly unlike that of O'Connell, with whom he was so often associated. A Southern writer, about thirty years ago, thus vividly contrasted the artificial styles of Sheil and Macaulay with the spontaneous eloquence of Grattan and Burke: "Macaulay's genius is the genius of scholasticism. He is a living library; and the old vulgarism, 'He talks like a book,' is a literal truth in his case. We look upon him as the last of the rhetoricians who considered style of more importance than facts, and paid more attention to the manner than to the matter of their discourse. Nor is he even the greatest of that school. He was excelled by Richard Lalor Sheil, who had always laid by a stock of good things, pickled and preserved for use. The Irishman was more rapid and agile than his Scotch rival, and sent up rockets while the other was spinning catherine-wheels. A shrewd wit called Sheil 'a fly in amber,' and the title was appropriate enough; but Macaulay is a fossil of far greater solidity and size, and of less immediate radiance. Both belong to the artificial school, which is rapidly passing away. The palmy days of parliamentary oratory in England must be over, when the House is filled to hear Macaulay. The slipshod, conversational style, which has succeeded the dignified declamation of the last generation, must be wearisome and worthless indeed, when his



cold correctness and passionless pomp are hailed as a pleasurable relief. Oh! for an hour of Henry Grattan, with his fierce and flashing style,—his withering sarcasm,—his lofty imagery, which flew with the wing of an eagle, and opened its eyes at the sun,—to rouse these prosy cits and yawning squires into something like energy and life! Oh! for the words of Burke, so rich, so rotund, so many-hued, which passed before the gaze like a flight of purple birds, to recall to the jaded Commons a sense of true imagination, of genuine eloquence! It is true Burke was called ‘The Dinner Bell’ by his contemporaries, for his speeches were a little voluminous sometimes; but the nickname was given in a time when ‘there were giants upon the earth’; *now* his voice would be considered a tocsin; such is the degeneracy of British orators!”

a translation of Livy, whose harangues had a peculiar fascination for him.

At length the thought struck him that he might make a living by becoming a lawyer. To the jealous science which, according to Lord Coke, allows of no other mistress, he paid his attentions, which were not apt to be undivided, for six weeks,—a high authority says, one month; yet during that time he read Coke upon Littleton and the Virginia laws. It was with some difficulty that he obtained a license to practice, and it was only upon the ground that he was evidently a man of genius, and would be likely soon to fill up the gaps in his knowledge. For the next four years he was plunged into the deepest poverty. During most of this time he lived with his father-in-law, and assisted him in tavern-keeping. At last an occasion arose for the display of his latent powers, and he sprang by one bound into celebrity. This was the "tobacco case," in which the clergy of the English church brought a suit to recover their annual stipend, as fixed by law, of sixteen thousand pounds of tobacco. The crop having failed, an Act had been passed by the Legislature allowing the planters to pay the tax in money, at the rate of 16s 8d per hundredweight, although the actual value was 50s or 60s. This Act was decided by the Court to be invalid, and nothing remained but to assess the damages by a writ of inquiry. Mr. Lewis, the planters' counsel, threw up the cause as hopeless, and they therefore applied to Henry, as none of the veteran practitioners was willing to risk his reputation upon it. When on the appointed day, in 1763, the cause came on for trial before the jury, a great crowd had assembled in the courtroom, both of the common people and the clergy. As this was Henry's first appearance at the bar, curiosity was on

tiptoe to watch his bearing and hear his accents. Rising awkwardly, he faltered so in his exordium that his friends hung their heads, the clergy began to exchange sly looks with each other, as if confident of their triumph, while his father, who was the presiding judge, almost sank with confusion from his seat. But the young advocate soon recovered his self-possession. Gradually his mind warmed with his theme; words came, "like nimble and airy servitors," to his lips; his features were lighted up with the fire of genius; his attitude became erect and lofty; his action became graceful and commanding; his eye sparkled with intelligence; all that was coarse and clownish in his appearance vanished, and he underwent "that mysterious and almost supernatural transformation, which the fire of his own eloquence never failed to work in him." The mockery of the clergy was soon turned into alarm. For a short time they listened as if spell-bound, but when, in answer to the eulogy of his opponent, the young lawyer turned upon them, and poured upon them a torrent of overwhelming invective, they fled from the bench in precipitation and terror. The jury, as we have already seen (p. 17), under the wand of the enchanter, lost sight of law and evidence, and returned a verdict for the planters. For generations afterward the old people of the country could not think of a higher compliment to a speaker than to say of him: "He is almost equal to Patrick when he pled against the parsons."

From this time Henry became the idol of the people, and a year afterward he was elected to the House of Burgesses. His first grand effort in this body was in support of resolutions which he had introduced against the Stamp Act. The old aristocratic members were star-

tled by his audacity, and an attempt was made to overawe the young and inexperienced member at the very outset. But Henry, though almost wholly unsupported by the influential members, was equal to the occasion, and dashed into the ranks of the veteran statesmen with such steadiness and power as scattered their trained legions to the winds. The contest on the last and boldest resolution was, to use Jefferson's phrase, "most bloody," but the orator triumphed by a single vote. The intensity of the excitement may be inferred from a remark made after the adjournment by Peyton Randolph, the King's Attorney-General: "I would have given five hundred guineas for a single vote." The flame of opposition to British taxation, which Henry had thus kindled, spread, as if on the wings of the wind, from one end of the land to the other; his resolutions, with progressive changes, were adopted by the other colonies; and the whole nation speedily found itself, as if by magic, in an attitude of determined hostility to the mother country.

In 1774 Henry was elected a member of the first Congress, and in this august body his superiority was established as readily as in the House of Burgesses. Though the delegates had met for the express purpose of resisting the encroachments of the King and Parliament, they had apparently not fully weighed the fearful responsibility which they had assumed till this hour. It now pressed upon them with overwhelming force, and when the organization of the House was completed, a long and solemn pause followed, which Henry was the first to break. Rising slowly, as if borne down by the weight of his theme, he faltered through an impressive exordium, and then gradually launched forth into a vivid and burning

recital of the colonial wrongs. We have no space for the details of his speech; it is sufficient to say that the wonder-working power of this, as of his other speeches, of which no exact report has come down to us, is proved by the very exaggeration of the accounts that are given of them. As he swept forward with his high argument, his majestic attitude, the spell of his eye, the charm of his emphasis, the "almost superhuman lustre of his countenance," impressed even that august assemblage of the most eminent intellects of the nation with astonishment and awe. As he sat down, a murmur of admiration ran through the assembly; the convention, now nerved to action, shook off the incubus which had weighed on its spirits; and Henry, as he had been proclaimed to be the first speaker in Virginia, was now admitted to be the greatest orator in America.

A still greater speech was the memorable one delivered on March 20, 1775, when he brought forward in the Virginia Convention his resolutions for arming and equipping the militia of the colony. The power of this effort is shown by the fact, not only that it has been worn to rags by schoolboys, with whom it has been a favorite selection for declamation for a century, and that it still fires the soul of the hearer when listened to for the hundredth time, but that the measures which it advocated were adopted, although their bare announcement had sent an electric shock of consternation through the assembly. Some of the firmest patriots in that body, including several of the most distinguished members of the late Congress, and, indeed, all the leading statesmen in the Convention, opposed the resolutions with all the power of their logic and all the weight of their influence; but in

vain; all objections were swept away as so many straws on the resistless tide of Henry's eloquence.\*

One of Henry's best efforts was his speech made after the Revolution in behalf of the British refugees. Against this class a bitter and deep-rooted prejudice was cherished, and to overcome it was no easy task. What can be finer than the following appeal both to the reason and pride of his hearers?—"The population of the old world is full to overflowing. . . . Sir, they are already standing upon tip-toe upon their native shores, and looking to your coasts with a wistful and longing eye. . . . As I have no prejudices to prevent my making use of them, so, sir, I have no fear of any mischief that they can do us. Afraid of *them!*—what, sir," said he, rising to one of his loftiest attitudes, and assuming a look of the most indignant and sovereign contempt,—“shall *we*, who have laid the proud British *lion* at our feet, now be afraid of his *whelps?*”

If we may judge by the speech in the case of John Hook, Henry's powers of wit, burlesque, and ridicule were hardly inferior to his graver faculties. Hook was a Scotchman, fond of money, and suspected of being unfavorable to the American cause. Two of his bullocks had been seized in 1771 for the use of the troops; and, as soon as peace was established, he brought an action against the commissary. Henry was engaged for the defense. Mr. Wirt, Henry's biographer, states that,—

\* The famous phrase, “We must fight; I repeat it, sir, we must fight,”—was suggested to Henry by a letter of Major Joseph Hawley, of Northampton, Mass., to John Adams. This letter, which concluded with the words, “After all, we must fight,” was read by Adams to Henry, who listened to it with great attention, and, as soon as he heard these words, erected his head, and “with an energy and vehemence that I can never forget,” says Mr. Adams. “broke out with—‘By G— I am of that man's mind!’” Mr. Adams adds that he considered this to be, not a taking of the name of God in vain, but a sacred oath upon a very great occasion.

"He painted the distresses of the American army, exposed almost naked to the rigor of a winter's sky, and marking the frozen ground over which they marched with the blood of their unshod feet. 'Where was the man,' he said, 'who had an American heart in his bosom, who would not have thrown open his fields, his barns, his cellars, the doors of his house, the portals of his breast, to receive with open arms the meanest soldier in that little famished band of patriots? Where is the man? *There* he stands; but whether the heart of an American beats in his bosom, you, gentlemen, are to judge.' He then carried the jury, by the powers of his imagination, to the plains round York, the surrender of which had followed shortly after the seizure of the cattle. He depicted the surrender in the most glowing and noble colors of his eloquence: the audience saw before their eyes the humiliation and dejection of the British, as they marched out of their trenches; they saw the triumph which lighted up every patriot face, and heard the shouts of victory, and the cry of 'Washington and Liberty,' as it rang and echoed through the American ranks, and was reverberated from the hills and shores of the neighboring river. 'But hark! what notes of discord are these, which disturb the general joy, and silence the acclamations of victory? They are the notes of John Hook, *hoarsely bawling through the American camp, beef! beef! beef!*'"

Mr. Wirt states that the clerk of the court, unable to restrain his merriment, and unwilling to commit any breach of decorum, rushed out, and rolled on the ground in a paroxysm of laughter. "Jemmy Steptoe, what the devil ails ye, mon?" exclaimed Hook, the plaintiff. Mr. Steptoe could only reply that he could not help it. "Never mind ye," said Hook; "wait till Billy Cowan gets up; he'll show him the la'." But Billy Cowan's plea was unavailing. The cause was decided by acclamation; and a cry of *tar and feathers* having succeeded to that of *beef*, the plaintiff deemed it prudent to beat a precipitate retreat.

In appearance Henry was rather striking than prepossessing. Tall, spare, raw-boned, and slightly stooping in the shoulders,—dark and sunburnt in complexion, and having a habitual contraction of the brow which gave him a harsh look till he spoke,—he gave no indication of the majesty and grace which he assumed when his genius was roused. When he spoke, his whole appearance underwent a marvellous transformation. His person rose erect;

his head, instead of drooping, was thrown proudly aloft; and he seemed like another being. His eyes, which were overshadowed by dark, thick eyebrows, were his finest feature. Brilliant, full of spirit, and capable of the most rapidly shifting and powerful expression, they had at one time a piercing and terrible aspect which made an opponent quail beneath their gaze, and, at another, they were "as soft and tender as those of Pity herself." His voice, though not musical, was clear, distinct, and of remarkable compass and power. Its persuasive accents were as mild and mellifluous as those of a lute; but when rousing his countrymen to arms, it was like the war-blast of a trumpet. His gesticulation, action, and facial expression, gave force to his most trivial observations. In one of his speeches, having occasion to declare that the consent of Great Britain was not necessary to create us a nation,—that "we were a nation long before the monarch of that little island in the Atlantic ocean gave his puny assent to it,"—he accompanied the words with a gesture which strikingly impressed all who witnessed it. Rising on tiptoe, and half-closing his eyelids, as if endeavoring with extreme difficulty to draw a sight on some object almost too microscopic for vision, he pointed to a vast distance, and blew out the words "p-u-n-y assent" with his lips curled with unutterable contempt. In the same speech, having occasion to magnify this dot on the Atlantic into a formidable power, he found no difficulty in doing so by gestures almost equally significant. It is said that his pauses were eminently happy, being followed by a singular energy and significance of look that drove the thought home to the mind and heart.

In arguing abstruse and knotty questions of law he



won no laurels. As we have seen, he acquired little legal lore in youth, and he never filled up the chasms in his learning in after-life. His most brilliant successes at the bar were won in jury trials. In these he was always at home. No performer that ever "swept the sounding lyre" ever had a more imperial mastery over its strings, than Henry had over all the chords in the hearts of the twelve men in the box, when he sought to convince them. "The tones of his voice," says an able legal contemporary, "were insinuated into the feelings of his hearers in a manner that baffles description." His victories were due partly to this oratorical power, and partly to his wonderful knowledge of the human heart, and his power of putting his reasoning into clear and pointed aphorisms. Often he condensed the substance of a long argument into a short, pithy question, which was decisive of the case.

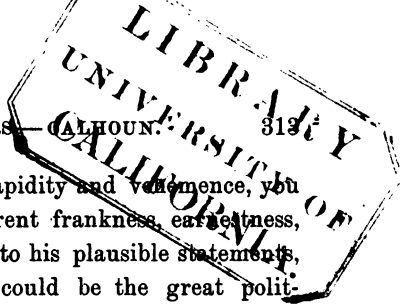
A British reviewer has called attention to the striking resemblance which Henry's oratory bears to Lord Chatham's, notwithstanding the startling discrepancy between their birth, breeding, tastes, habits, and pursuits: "The one, a born member of the English aristocracy,—the other, a son of a Virginia farmer; the one educated at Eton and Oxford,—the other, picking up a little Latin grammar at a day-school; . . . the one, so fine a gentleman and so inveterate an actor, that, before receiving the most insignificant visitor, he was wont to call for his wig, and settle himself in an imposing attitude,—the other, slouching into the provincial parliament with his leather gaiters and shooting-jacket. But they meet in all the grand elemental points,—in fire, force, energy, and intrepidity—the sagacity that works by intuition,—the faculty of taking in the entire subject at a glance, or lighting up a

whole question by a metaphor,—the fondness for Saxon words, short uninverted Saxon sentences, downright assertions, and hazardous apostrophes,—above all, in the singular tact and felicity with which their dramatic (or rather melodramatic) touches were brought in.”

The greatest *speech* made in America this century was made by Daniel Webster in reply to Hayne. The greatest *orator* of this country,—Patrick Henry, perhaps, excepted,—we think was HENRY CLAY. In January, 1840, it was our good fortune to spend nearly two weeks at Washington, mostly at the capitol, where we heard speeches by all the leading men of the two houses. We need not say that “there were giants in those days.” It is enough to call over the names of Webster, Clay, Calhoun, Crittenden, McDuffie, Preston, Douglas, in the Senate, and of John Quincy Adams, Cushing, Hoffman, Evans, and Marshall in the House, to show that the dwarfs in that Congress would be giants in the present. The first day we spent in the House, there was a stormy debate on the New Jersey question. The discussion grew so violent that members shook their fists at each other; invitations to “coffee and pistols” were given; and, to prevent a tumult, the House adjourned. This sent us to the Senate chamber, where our attention was at once arrested by a voice that seemed like the music of the spheres. It came from the lips of a tall, well-formed man, with a wide mouth, a flashing eye, and a countenance that revealed every change of thought within. It had a wonderful flexibility and compass, at one moment crashing upon the ear in thunder-peals, and the next falling in music as soft as that of “summer winds a-wooing flowers.” It rarely startled the

hearer, however, with violent contrasts of pitch, and was equally distinct and clear when it rang out in trumpet tones, and when it sank to the lowest whisper. Every syllable, we had almost said, every letter, was perfectly audible, and as "musical as is Apollo's lute." There was not a word of rant, not one tone of vociferation; in the very climax of his passion he spoke deliberately, and his outpouring of denunciation was as slow and steady as the tread of Nemesis. He gesticulated all over. As he spoke, he stepped forward and backward with effect; and the nodding of his head, hung on a long neck,—his arms, hands, fingers, feet, and even his spectacles and blue handkerchief, aided him in debate. Who could it be? It took but a minute to answer the question. It was,—it *could* be no other than—Henry Clay. He had just begun an attack on another giant of the Senate; and the scene of intellectual fence that followed, during which they cut and thrust, lunged at each other and parried, some half-a-dozen times, is one of those that root themselves forever in the memory. Indeed, their very words have clung like burs to our recollection.

Mr. Clay's opponent was a somewhat tall, slender-built, ghostly-looking man, about fifty years of age, erect and earnest, with an eye like a hawk's, and hair sticking up "like quills on the fretful porcupine." His voice was harsh, his gestures stiff and like the motions of a pump-handle. There was no ease, flexibility, grace, or charm, in his manner; yet there was something in his physiognomy and bearing,—his brilliant, spectral eyes, his colorless cheek, blanched with thought, and his compressed lips,—that riveted your attention as with hooks of steel. As his words struggled for a moment in his throat, and then



rushed out with tumultuous rapidity and vehemence, you were impressed with his apparent frankness, earnestness, and sincerity. As you listened to his plausible statements, it seemed incredible that this could be the great political sophist of America,—the hair-splitting logician and arch-nullifier, JOHN C. CALHOUN. Yet he, you were told, it was; and, as you scanned his features, you thought of Milton's lines on the hero of Paradise Lost:

“ His face

Deep scars of thunder had entrenched; and Care  
Sat on his faded cheek; but under brows  
Of dauntless courage.”

Calhoun's style of speaking was generally colloquial. He talked like a merchant to his clerks, and used short Saxon words and proverbial phrases. Clay had just taunted him with a rumor that he had left the Opposition ranks and struck hands with the Administration. He (Mr. Clay) “ would like to know what *compromises* have been made between the honorable Senator from South Carolina and the ‘Kinderhook fox’ ” (meaning President Van Buren). Calhoun's reply,—his defiant look, his tones,—are as vivid to us as if we had seen and heard him yesterday. “ No man,” he began, “ ought to be more tender on the subject of compromises than the honorable Senator from Kentucky.” Then, alluding to the compromise effected by Clay in the Nullification crisis of 1830, he added: “ The Senator from Kentucky was *flat on his back*. I repeat it, sir; the Senator was *flat on his back*, and couldn't move. I wrote home to my friends in South Carolina half-a-dozen letters, saying that the honorable Senator from Kentucky was flat on his back, and couldn't move. I was his *master* on that occasion. I repeat it, sir; I was his *master* on that occasion.

He went to *my school*. He learned of *me*." Never shall we forget the consummate grace of manner,—the thrilling tones,—the electric effect of Clay's rejoinder. The two antagonists sat nearly at the extreme ends of the semi-circular rows of seats,—Calhoun sitting in the front row, on the President's right; Clay in the rear row, on his left. As we gazed on these giant and veteran foes,—both steeped to the eye in fight, cunning of fence, masters of their weapons, and merciless in their use, we thought of the lines of Milton:

"This day will pour down,  
If I conjecture aught, no drizzling shower,  
But rattling storms of arrows barbed with fire."

"The honorable senator from South Carolina," said Clay, "says that I was flat on my back, and that he wrote home to his friends in South Carolina half-a-dozen letters stating that I was flat on my back, and couldn't move. Admirable evidence this in a court of law! First *make* an assertion, then *quote your own letters* to prove it! But the honorable senator says that he was my *master* on that occasion!" As he said this, the speaker advanced down the aisle directly in front of Calhoun, and pointing to him with his quivering finger, said in tones and with looks in which were concentrated the utmost scorn and defiance,—"*He* my master! *He* my master!" he continued in louder tones, with his finger still pointed, and retreating backward, while his air and manner indicated the intensest abhorrence. "*HE* my master!" he a third time cried, raising his voice to a still higher key, while he retreated backward to the very lobby; then, suddenly changing his voice from a trumpet peal to almost a whisper, which yet was distinctly audible in every nook and corner of the

Senate chamber, he added,—“Sir, I *would not own him for my SLAVE!*” For an instant, there was a hush of breathless silence; then followed a tempest of applause, which for a while checked all further debate, and came near causing an expulsion of the spectators from the galleries. The Kentucky Senator then proceeded: “The Senator from South Carolina further declares that I was not only flat on my back, but that another Senator (Mr. Webster) and the President had robbed me of my strength! Why, sir, I gloried in my strength. Flat on my back as the Senator says I was, he was indebted to me for that measure which relieved him of the difficulties” (Jackson’s threats to arrest and hang him) “by which he was surrounded. Flat as I was, I was able to carry that Compromise through the Senate in opposition to the gentleman” (Mr. Webster) “who, the gentleman from South Carolina said, had supplanted me, and against his opposition.” In his closing remarks Calhoun taunted his opponent with his failure to obtain the Presidential nomination at the recent convention at Harrisburg (1839), to which the latter replied as follows: “As for me, Mr. President, my sands are nearly run, physically, and, if you please, politically also; but I shall soon retire from the arena of public strife, and when I do so withdraw myself, it will be with the delightful consciousness of having served the best interests of my country, a consciousness of which the honorable Senator from South Carolina (pointing and shaking his finger at Calhoun) “*with all his presumptuousness* will never be able to deprive me.”

In the entire roll of distinguished orators, British and American, there is hardly one whose printed speeches give so inadequate an idea of his powers as do those of Henry

Clay. His eloquence was generally of a warm and popular rather than of a strictly argumentative cast, and abound in just those excellences which lose their interest when divorced from the orator's manner and from the occasion that produced them, and in those faults that escape censure, only when it can be pleaded for them that they are the inevitable overflow of a mind too vividly at work to restrain the abundance of its current. It was the opinion of William Wirt that no orator could write out a faithful report of a speech which he had pronounced, except immediately after its delivery. It must be done, he said, while the mind is yet tossing with the storm, and before the waves have lost either their direction or their magnitude. But how can the storm and tempest of eloquence, the waves of passion, the lightning of indignation, be conveyed on paper? Words may be written or printed; but who can print the air and manner that gave weight to a commonplace observation, and effect to a tawdry figure? Who can undertake to represent in written forms of language, the flashing eye, the quivering lip, the majestic bearing, the graceful gesture, the ever-changing and impassioned tones that thrill with an almost unearthly power to the inmost recesses of the soul? These are the life and spirit of all eloquence; and to judge of a speech which charmed all who heard it, by reading it in print after the charmer's voice is hushed, and at a different time, place, and occasion from those of its delivery, is as absurd as to judge of a beauty by looking at her skeleton, or to express an opinion of a song without hearing the tune to which it owed nearly all its charm.

Few orators of equal fame have begun their career with so slender an intellectual equipment as Henry Clay. His

father having died when he was but four years old, his mother, who was left in poverty with seven children, could do but little for his education. For three years he was placed under the charge of one Peter Deacon, an Englishman, who taught in a log school-house which had no floor but the earth, and which was lighted by the open door only. Here he was instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic, after which he was employed in a store at Richmond, Virginia, and thence transferred to a desk clerkship in the office of the high court of chancery in that State. Shortly after he was employed as an amanuensis by Chancellor Wythe, who, perceiving his talents and his fondness for books, urged him to study law, gave him the use of his library and directed his reading. So rapidly did he devour and assimilate his mental food, that it is said the Chancellor had only to name a book, and the next time he met his pupil he found him not only master of its contents, but "deeply versed in them, and extending his thoughts far beyond his instructors. The youth did not invoke the keepers of knowledge to let him into their secrets, but marched straight into their wide domains, as if to the possession of his native rights." Many years after, when he had acquired a national fame, a plain old country gentleman gave the following toast at a Fourth-of-July dinner: "HENRY CLAY,—He and I were born close to the Slashes of old Hanover. He worked barefooted, and so did I; he went to mill, and so did I; he was good to his mamma, and so was I. I know him like a book, and love him like a brother."

In 1797, at the age of twenty, Clay removed from Virginia to Lexington, Kentucky, where he began the practice of law. Though penniless at first, he soon re-



ceived his first fifteen shillings fee, and then, to use his own words, "immediately rushed into a successful and lucrative practice." He was especially successful in criminal cases, often winning verdicts from juries by the magnetism of his oratory, in defiance of both law and evidence. Before his admission to the Kentucky bar, he joined a debating club, at a meeting of which, in his first attempt to speak, he broke down. Beginning his speech with "Gentlemen of the Jury," he was so confused by the perception of his mistake, that he could not go on. Encouraged by the members of the club, he began again with the same words; but, upon a third trial, he was more successful, and, gaining confidence as he proceeded, he burst the trammels of his youthful diffidence, and clothing his thoughts in appropriate language, was loudly and warmly cheered. With the exception of a single occasion, when his memory proved treacherous, a quarter of a century later, his thunder was never again "checked in mid volley," for lack of thoughts or language. On that occasion, as he was addressing the legislature of Virginia, he began to quote the well-known lines of Scott,— "Lives there a man," etc., and suddenly stopped, unable to recall the rest. Closing his eyes, and pressing his forehead with the palm of his hand, to aid his recollection, he was fortunately supposed by the audience to be overcome by the power and intensity of his feelings. In a few moments the lines came to his lips, and as he pronounced them in thrilling tones,—

"Lives there a man with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land?"—

a profound sensation pervaded the assembly, which manifested itself, in many cases, by tears.

In person, Clay was tall and commanding, being six feet and one inch in stature, and was noted for the erect appearance he presented, whether standing, walking, or talking. The most striking features of his countenance were a high forehead, a prominent nose, an uncommonly large mouth, and blue eyes, which, though not particularly expressive when in repose, had an electrical appearance when kindled. His voice, as we have already said, was one of extraordinary compass, melody, and power. From the "deep and dreadful sub-bass of the organ" to the most aerial warblings of its highest key, hardly a pipe or a stop was wanting. Like all magical voices, it had the faculty of imparting to the most familiar and commonplace expressions an inexpressible fascination; and in listening to its melting tones an enthusiastic listener might say:

"Thy sweet words drop upon the ear as soft  
As rose leaves on a well; and I could listen  
As though the immortal melody of heaven  
Were wrought into one word,—that word a whisper,  
That whisper all I want from all I love."

Probably no orator ever lived who, when speaking on a great occasion, was more completely absorbed in his theme. "I do not know how it is with others," he once said, "but, on such occasions, I seem to be unconscious of the external world. Wholly engrossed by the subject before me, I lose all sense of personal identity, of time, or of surrounding objects." It is no wonder that when an orator is thus abandoned,—when he becomes all feeling, from the core of his heart to the surface of his skin, and from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, gushing through every pore and expressed through every organ,—that his sway over his hearers should be complete.

We have no space for extracts from any of Clay's great speeches, such as those on South American Independence, Internal Improvement, the Sub-Treasury Scheme, etc. etc.; and will, therefore, conclude this sketch with a passage from an address made to the citizens of Lexington, Ky., in 1843, after his first retirement from Congress. He was then in his sixty-sixth year, and, in defending himself from some attacks made upon his character, said: "Fellow citizens: I now am an *old man*—*quite* an old man." Here he bent himself downward. "But yet it will be found I am not too old to vindicate my principles, to stand by my friends, or to defend myself,"—raising his voice louder and louder, at each successive member of the sentence, and elevating his person in a most impressive manner. He then proceeded thus: "It so happens that I have again located myself in the practice of my profession, in an office within a few rods of the one which I occupied, when, more than forty years ago, I first came among you, an orphan and a stranger, and your fathers took me by the hand, and made me what I am. I feel like an old stag, which has been long coursed by the hunters and the hounds, through brakes and briars, and o'er distant plains, and has at last returned himself to his ancient lair, to lay him down and die. And yet the vile curs of party are barking at my heels, and the blood-hounds of personal malignity are aiming at my throat. *I scorn and defy them, as I ever did.*" As he uttered these last words, he raised himself, says an eyewitness, to his most erect posture, and lifted up his hands and arms above his head, till his tall person seemed to have nearly doubled its height. The effect was overwhelming, beyond all power of description.

The leading faculty of Calhoun's mind was his power of analysis. In the ability to examine a complex idea, to resolve it into its simplest elements, he had no superior. Next to this, his most striking characteristic was the depth of his convictions. Though you differed from every word he uttered, you were persuaded of his profound belief in what he said, and his willingness to stake life and honor on each sentence. No man ever cared less for the graces and polish of the schools. Intensely earnest, he cared only to make himself understood; and while the periods of Clay glittered "like polished lances in a sunny forest," Calhoun, in his vehemence, bit off the last syllables, and sometimes eat up whole sentences in the fury of his enunciation.

Napoleon said of La Place, when the latter was in office, that he carried into the discharge of his duties the spirit of infinitesimal quantities; and so it has been said of Calhoun, that he never forgot the refinements and subtleties of his peculiar metaphysics. His speeches, his letters, his dissertations, though filling six large volumes, are but repetitions of the same primary ideas put through the same logical mill. Clay was chivalric, impulsive, poetic, enthusiastic,—full of coruscations of wit, and flashes of fancy; "Webster, besides the Doric propriety of his diction, arrested your attention by the ponderous ring in his weighty sentences, as they fell like trip-hammers upon the casques of his antagonists; but Calhoun was always dry, direct, intensely ratiocinative,—moving forward, like Babbage's calculating machine, from one numeral to another, till the net quotient, or sum total, was evolved." There is an abundance of metaphysical subtlety, of hard reasoning, and "obstinate questionings,"

in his speeches, but no sap, nothing juicy or unctuous, none of the poetry of eloquence. He is not one of those speakers

" Whose thoughts possess us like a passion,  
Through every limb and the whole heart; whose words  
Haunt us as eagles haunt the mountain air,"

suggesting a thousand ideas and sentiments which they do not express. One absorbing passion seems to have taken possession of his soul, and to have overpowered all the rest. As Charles Lamb said of the Quakers, that, if they could, they would paint the universe in drab, so it may be said of Calhoun, that the ideal of his life was to gather statistics of the United States, and work them up into theories of State Rights and Nullification.

Clay's words, when assailing an enemy, were usually courteous and polished, while Calhoun's were fierce, blunt, and rudely terrible. The one hit his man with a keen rapier, like a courtier of the old régime; the other knocked him down with a sledge-hammer, like a Scandinavian giant. Clay allows you to die, like Lord Chester, in a becoming attitude; while Calhoun breaks your bones, and leaves you sprawling on the floor. The one stabs you with a smile; the other smashes you with a frown. Clay is even more dangerous than Calhoun, as the graceful leopard is, perhaps, an antagonist, more to be feared than the grizzly bear. To the noble Kentuckian we might apply, with a slight change, the lines of Bulwer:

" Fierce, haughty, rash, irregularly great,  
Next Stanley comes, the *Rupert* of debate;"

and we might add, too, that, like the warrior to whom Norna chants her witch-song, seldom

" Lies he still, through sloth or fear,  
When point and edge are glittering near."

Many great men "shame their worshipers" on a near approach. Their dwarfish bodies give the lie to their intellectual pretensions; their souls are physiognomically slandered by their bodies. But whoever looked upon DANIEL WEBSTER, with his massive, Herculean frame, his <sup>1752</sup> beetling brows, deep-set, searching black eyes, and imperial port, felt instantaneously that a Titan stood before him. In his voice, in his step, and in his bearing, there was a grandeur that took the imagination by storm. "Since Charlemagne," said Theodore Parker, "I think there has not been such a grand figure in all Christendom." When Thorwaldsen, the Danish sculptor, saw the cast of his bust in Powers's studio at Rome, he mistook it for a head of Jupiter. Sydney Smith was astonished at this specimen of "American physical degeneracy." Carlyle, speaking of his large, dark, and cavernous eyes, overhung by shaggy brows, said that, when in repose, they were "like blast furnaces blown out." Nature had set her seal of greatness visibly upon him, and his achievements in the Senate and the forum, in the closet and before masses of his fellow-citizens, did not belie the promise of his god-like physiognomy. Doubtless Calhoun had a more acute and metaphysical mind, and could divide a line more nicely "'twixt south and southwest side"; Clay had a more electric or magnetic nature, and showed far keener sagacity in divining public sentiment, and in sweeping the strings of popular feeling; but in sheer intellectual might,—in that comprehensiveness of vision which sees all the sides of a subject and judges it in all its relations,—in that largeness and weight of utterance which give the greatest impressiveness to everything that one says, and in hard logic, which links conclusion to conclusion

like a chain of iron,—neither Clay, nor Calhoun, nor any other American, was ever equal to Webster. He was emphatically the orator of the understanding, and for this reason, because he spoke to the head rather than to the heart,—because his qualities were those imperial ones that compel admiration, rather than win love,—he was never a favorite of the populace. The young men of the country worshiped him, and the thinking men looked up to him with admiration, but generally he was the pride of the people rather than their idol.

It is a notable fact that Webster, like Bacon, was a sickly child, and but for that reason might never have been sent to college. It is a curious fact also, that, when at the academy in Exeter, he was afflicted with such an extreme shyness that he took no part in the declamations. Many pieces were committed to memory and rehearsed again and again by him in his room; but when his name was called in the school-room, and all eyes were fastened upon him, he was glued to his seat. Upon entering college, however, he became at once an easy and impressive speaker and debater, and when he took the floor for the first time in Congress he sprang by one bound to the very front rank of American parliamentary debaters. His speech was so weighty, luminous, and convincing, that Chief Justice Marshall prophesied his future eminence. With his advent at Washington, a new school of oratory,—now known throughout the country as “the Websterian,”—was formed, for even thus early his oratory had mainly all the qualities which characterized it in his riper years. In its Demosthenian simplicity and strength, it was alike opposed to the flowery sentimentalism of Wirt and to the frigid vehemence and pedantic

classicality of Pinkney. His style was Doric, not Corinthian, reminding one by its massive strength of the shafts hewn from the granite hills of his native state. He was at this time, as he continued to be throughout his whole subsequent life, the personification of the understanding, as distinguished from the intuitive reason and the creative imagination. The basis of his intellect was an uncommon common sense. He did not dart to his conclusions with the swift discernment of the eagle-eyed Clay, but won them by sheer force of thinking. He concentrated all his mental faculties upon a confused and perplexing mass of facts, and it was at once resolved and luminous, as under the powerful vision of the telescope the milky way breaks into stars. He had no sophisms or verbal dexterities, no intellectual juggleries. His power before the jury, court, senate, and audience, lay not in his intellectual subtlety, or displays of feeling and imagination, but in his appeals to facts. Mr. Parker, in his "Golden Age of American Oratory," tells of a case about two car-wheels, in which, by a sentence and a look, Webster crushed one of Choate's subtlest and most fine-spun arguments to atoms. The wheels, which to common eyes looked as if made from the same model, Choate endeavored to show, by a train of hair-splitting reasoning and by a profound discourse on "the fixation of points," had hardly a shadow of essential resemblance. "But," said Webster, and his great eyes opened wide and black, as he stared at the big twin wheels before him, "gentlemen of the jury, there they are,—look at 'em!" and as he thundered out these words, in tones of vast volume, the distorted wheels shrunk into their original similarity, and the cunning argument on "the fixation of



points" died a natural death. Webster did not excel in abstract reasoning,—at least, it was not his forte, as it was Calhoun's; it was when, Antæus-like, he planted his feet upon the earth, that you felt his power. His grasp of facts, and skill in arranging them, were alike prodigious. His understanding swept over the whole extent of a subject, classified and systematized its tangled details, discerned its laws, and made it so luminous, that the simplest intellect could apprehend it. He illuminated dark themes, obscured by sophistry, with such a blaze of light that the hearer, finding them so transparent, underrated the difficulty overcome. Like Lord Mansfield, he was distinguished for his skill in statement. His narrative of the facts in a case was itself a demonstration.

Giant-like as was his intellect, it was naturally sluggish and heavy, and required, as we have said, the stimulus of a great occasion or a great antagonist to call forth its slumbering power. He was like a mighty line-of-battle ship, which is not easily set in motion, but whose guns, when she is once fairly engaged, crush everything opposed to her. On a small subject, he was dull. If required to speak at a public dinner, or on a parade day, he floundered "like a whale in a frog-pond." As Grattan said of Flood, "put a distaff in his hand, and, like Hercules, he makes sad work of it; but give him a thunderbolt, and he has the arm of a Jove." We heard him speak at the Harvard Centennial Celebration in 1838, at which two thousand alumni were gathered, and we are sure that he wearied all who listened to him. Legaré, Bancroft, Story, all surpassed him. It was not merely because he lacked the necessary stimulus that he failed on these occasions, but because he had too much intellectual integrity for this kind

of sham oratory; he had no taste for exalting molehills into mountains, or killing humming-birds with Paixhans. In his attempts at humor he was sometimes successful, but oftener reminded one of an elephant gambolling, or, "to make" men "sport, wreathing his lithe proboscis." Perhaps his best effort in this line was in a speech at Rochester, New York:

"Men of Rochester, I am glad to see you, and I am glad to see your noble city. Gentlemen, I saw your falls, which I am told are one hundred and fifty feet high. That is a very interesting fact. Gentlemen, Rome had her Cæsar, her Scipio, her Brutus; but Rome, in her proudest days, never had a waterfall one hundred and fifty feet high! Gentlemen, Greece had her Pericles, her Demosthenes, and her Socrates; but Greece, in her palmiest days, never had a waterfall one hundred and fifty feet high! Men of Rochester, go on. No people ever lost their liberties, who had a waterfall one hundred and fifty feet high!"

One of his best witticisms was a reply made to his friend, Mrs. Seaton, at Washington, who said to him one day, when he came home late from the Cabinet, that he looked fatigued and worried. He had been revising President Harrison's inaugural, which was brimful of pedantic allusions to Roman history, and especially to the Roman proconsuls, which the old hero, in spite of Webster's protest, had been obstinately bent on retaining. "I really hope," said Mrs. Seaton, "that nothing has happened." "You would think something had happened," Webster replied, "if you knew what I have done. I have killed seventeen Roman proconsuls as dead as smelts, every one of them." In debate Webster was quick at retort. If it was a personal insult that roused the slumbering lion, his roar of rage was appalling, and the spring and the death-blow that followed, were like lightning in their suddenness. But it was on momentous occasions, when great public interests were at stake, that the full might of his intellect was visible. When feebler men, awed by the darkness of

the political sky, fled for shelter from the tempest, he rushed forth exultingly to the elemental war, with all his faculties stimulated to their utmost. When the thunders of Nullification muttered in the distance, he coolly watched the coming storm; and when they burst, he bared his head to the bolts, like the mammoth of tradition, shaking them off as they fell. No man ever spoke, in whose utterances, even the simplest, the power of a great personality was more deeply felt. It has been justly said that "the appearance of his blue coat with its gilt buttons, and his buff vest, was always as inspiring to his friends, and as dispiriting to his enemies, as the gray overcoat and cocked hat of Napoleon. Wellington estimated the presence of Napoleon on the battle-field as equivalent to a reinforcement of fifty thousand troops (on his side), and the moral grandeur and influence of Webster were similar."

~~X~~ No triumph that he ever won seemed to tax all his powers or to drain the secret fountains of his strength. Behind the strongest arguments he put forward, there was always a vast reserved force. The heavy guns thundered forth, sending shot and shell directly to the mark, but behind them you saw the massed supports. It was the advanced guard only that was in action; the Imperial Guard was still kept back. It has been said of Edward Everett that he "seemed to spend himself upon his periods, while Webster stood behind his periods." You felt as you listened to him that the man was greater than his words, superior to his work. The very fact that his temperament was torpid and sluggish, making him ordinarily dull and unimpassioned, rendered his vehemence the more impressive. If it took long to light up the fires in his vast intellectual furnaces, they burned with

proportional fury, and consumed the hardest substances in their blaze.

Webster rarely attempted pathos, but when he did so, never failed to unseal the fountains of feeling. His celebrated apostrophe to Massachusetts, in the speech of 1830, made hoary men weep like children; and when he closed his argument in the Dartmouth College case, so overpowering was the pathos that even the grave judges of the Supreme Court could not check their tears. There was a vein of sadness in his nature, which tinged nearly all his utterances, and is visible, we think, in his grave, severe, and somewhat solemn face, furrowed and lined "like the side of a hill where the torrent hath been." The countenance is that of a man on whom "the burden of the unintelligible world" has weighed more heavily than on ordinary men. Yet he loved to unbend, at times, in the presence of his friends. After his great Plymouth and Adams and Jefferson orations, he was "as playful as a kitten," says Mr. Ticknor. Webster was not a learned man. He read much, not many books. A few authors, Shakspeare, Milton, and Burke, he seems to have read till their ideas were held in his own mind in constant solution. His great speeches, especially the reply to Hayne, are adorned with felicitous quotations and applications from the two poets, and the germs of some of his finest thoughts and metaphors may be found in Burke. There are great generals who can handle a force of ten thousand men so as to make them more effective than fifty thousand directed by other chiefs; and so it was with the facts and ideas marshalled and hurled against an adversary by Webster. In jury trials he culled and grouped the essential testimony of his wit-

nesses, put their words into a solid mass, and then "hurled it home in comparatively few sentences,—few, but thunderbolts."

Webster was not a rhetorician like Everett and Wirt. Though nice in his choice of words, he was not, like Pinkney and Choate, constantly racking dictionaries to obtain an affluence of synonyms. Though possessing an ample command of expression, he rarely wastes a word. He once criticised Watts for saying in a hymn that an angel moved "with most amazing speed." The line, he said, conveyed no sense. "It would amaze us," he added, "to see an oyster move a mile a day; it would not amaze us to see a greyhound run a mile a minute." No one of our great orators had a greater horror of epithets and adjectives, or more heartily despised all grandiloquence or *sesquipedalia verba*. For all cant and rhetorical trickery, —for all "bunkum" talk and windy declamation about "the shades of Hampden and Sidney" and "the eternal rights of man,"—for cheap enthusiasms and spread-eagles generally,—he had a supreme scorn. Few orators of equal imagination have so few figures of speech. There are more metaphors in ten pages of Burke than in all of Webster's works. In discussing a subject he loses no time in circumlocutions or digressions. He uses no scattering fowling-piece that sends its shot around the object to be hit, but plants his rifle-ball in the very centre of the target. Commonly he prepared himself with conscientious care for his speeches,—not by writing them out, but by thinking over and over what he had to say, all the while mentally facing his audience. In many passages, no doubt, the very language was pre-chosen,—selected with the nicest discrimination,—especially on critical occasions, and in the

closing paragraphs, in which were condensed the very pith and marrow of his entire argument. It is not easy to believe that the gorgeous bursts of eloquence, the "dazzling fence" of rhetoric, the exquisite quotations and allusions, and the compact arguments, in the reply to Hayne, were all in impromptu language. We must remember, however, that, in preparing his speeches for the press, he corrected them with merciless severity, and sometimes used the file till it weakened instead of polishing. Starr King observes that the reply to Hayne, unlike the "Oration on the Crown," which is veined with the fiercest invective, is free from taunts and sarcasms. "It is not only crushing, but Christian." Certain hearers of the speech, however, report one personal thrust which never appeared in print. "Sir," said Webster, in tones that shook the Senate chamber, "the Senator said that he should carry the war into Africa,—*if God gave him the power*. But, sir," said Webster, glowering down upon Hayne with a look of ineffable scorn, "God has not given him the power. I put it to the gentleman, *God has not given him the power*." It is rarely, however, that the language of scorn thus falls from Webster's lips. He neither mocks his antagonist like Gavazzi, nor insults him like O'Connell, but appeals directly to the intellect of the hearer, and is more anxious to convince than to excite.

Webster was as far as possible from being an orator of the Macaulay school, the members of which pickle and preserve their sentences for use. His forte was in argument, not in epigram; and he certainly would never have thought of writing revised editions of a phrase, like Sheridan. Even when he had conned a speech most carefully, he was more than once lifted out of his grooves, and

borne upon the heaving ground swell of his passion into extemporaneous splendor. An able English critic, who complains that Webster is not uniformly refined in his language, admits that the style of his speeches is of granite strength and texture, and therefore is not of the feeble order which depends upon the collocation of an epithet,—that, as Erskine said of Fox's speeches, "in their most imperfect reliques the bones of a giant are to be discovered."

Webster's manner in speaking was usually calm, quite the opposite of Clay's or Calhoun's. He was the most deliberate of our great orators, expressing himself in measured sentences with great economy of words. His voice was deep-toned, like that of a great bell or organ, yet was musical, and well adapted to his sinewy Anglo-Saxon words and weighty thoughts. On great occasions, when the whole man was roused, its swell and roll, we are told, struck upon the ears of the spell-bound audience in deep and melodious cadence, as waves upon the shore of the "far-resounding sea." Except in moments of high excitement, he had little action,—an occasional gesture with the right hand being all. In his law-arguments, he was still more sparing of gestures; his keen, deep-set eye glancing, his speaking countenance and distinct utterance, with an occasional emphatic inclination of the body, being the only means by which he urged home his arguments. The vast mass of the man did much to make his words impressive. "He carried men's minds, and overwhelmingly pressed his thought upon them, with the immense current of his physical energy."

Of all our great orators Daniel Webster was the freest from egotism, while at the same time he manifested a

magnificent self-reliance, based on a just estimate of his own powers. When Hayne made his fierce assault upon New England, it was feared by many, even of Mr. Webster's friends, that it could not be answered. On the evening before his reply, he read over to Edward Everett some of the points which he intended to make, in so dry, business-like a way that the latter expressed a fear that he was not aware of the magnitude of the occasion. But it was speedily evident that he was equal to the exigency—that his calmness was not that of indifference, but the repose of conscious power. It was the hush that precedes the storm. As Mr. Iredell, of North Carolina, said of his first speech, the lion had been started, but "they had not yet heard his roar or felt his claws." While the New Englanders in Washington were quaking with fear, their champion, never more playful or in higher spirits than that evening, slept that night, and "slept soundly." "So," says Everett, in one of his happiest passages, "the great Condé slept on the eve of the battle of Rocroi; so Alexander the Great slept on the eve of the battle of Arbela; and so they awoke to deeds of immortal fame. As I saw him in the evening (if I may borrow an illustration from his favorite amusement), he was as unconcerned and free in spirit as some here present have seen him, while floating in his fishing-boat along a hazy shore, gently rocking on the tranquil tide, dropping his line here and there with the varying fortune of his sport. The next morning he was some mighty admiral, dark and terrible; casting the long shadow of his frowning tiers far over the sea, that seemed to sink beneath him; his broad pennant streaming at the main, the stars and stripes at the fore, the mizzen and the peak; and bearing down like a tempest upon his



antagonist, with all his canvas strained to the wind, and all his thunders roaring from his broadsides." A defeat so terrible was never, except once, known before. It was when the Archangel drove Satan from heaven, and

"With the sound  
Of torrent floods, or of a numerous host,  
He on his impious foes right onward drove,  
Gloomy as night."

It seems almost incredible that this greatest and most memorable of American speeches, lasting six hours, during which every key in the entire gamut of eloquence was sounded,—abounding in argument, logic, wit, irony, poetry, pathos, and passion,—almost every page of which has been declaimed to death in colleges and academies,—should have been extempore. Into half a sheet of letter paper, of which the brief consisted, were condensed all the bolts of this marvellous reply. There is no doubt that the orator had, in one sense, been long prepared for the assault which he repelled with such crushing energy. He had long ago weighed and answered in his own mind the arguments for Nullification, and like the war-horse of the Scriptures, who "paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength," he had awaited the onset of the enemy with a stern and impatient joy. Indeed, he himself has left on record his feelings when he rose to reply. Not until he took the floor, and saw the concourse, and felt the hush, did he feel the slightest trepidation. Then for an instant the responsibility of his position rushed upon and nearly unmanned him. But after this first dizzy moment was over, during which the sea of faces whirled around him,—after a single recollection how his brother had fallen dead, a year before in a similar climax of excitement,—he subdued, by a strong effort, his trepidation;

“my feet,” he says, “felt the floor again, they seemed rooted like rocks, and all that I had ever read or thought or acted in literature, in history, in law, in politics, seemed to unroll before me in glowing panorama, and then it was easy, if I wanted a thunderbolt, *to reach out and take it as it went smoking by.*”

Some of Webster's indiscriminate eulogists are fond of comparing him with Burke. The difference was, that one had the very highest order of *talent*, the other had *genius*. Burke was, like the poet, “of imagination all compact,” and to this he added profound culture, earnestness, and moral sensibility; Webster's forte was in dialectics, in calm, masterly exposition, in massive strength of style, in all the qualities that give men leadership in debate. As another has said, “Where Webster reasoned, Burke philosophized; where Webster was serene, equable, ponderous, dealing his blows like an ancient catapult, Burke was clamorous, fiery, multitudinous, rushing forward like his own ‘whirlwind of cavalry.’ . . . Webster was the Roman temple, stately, solid, massive; Burke, the Gothic cathedral, fantastic, aspiring, and many-colored. The sentences of Webster roll along like the blasts of the trumpet on the night air; those of Burke are like the echoes of an organ in some ancient minster. Webster advances, in his heavy logical march, and his directness of purpose, like a Cæsarean legion, close, firm, serried, square; Burke, like an oriental procession, with elephants and trophies, and the pomp of banners.” Webster never could have delivered any one of the speeches of Burke on the trial of Hastings, blazing as they do with the splendors of a gorgeous rhetoric; nor could Burke, on the other hand, have made that overwhelming extempore reply to

Hayne, so full and running over with mingled logic, wit, irony, satire, persuasion, and pathos.

Among the various classifications of public speakers, one of the broadest and most natural is that of orators and rhetoricians,—natural orators and orators who have become such by art. Since the first class employ more or less art, and the latter have occasional bursts of inspiration, these divisions, like all others, partially overlap or cross each other, yet it is none the less a just one, which will suggest itself to every student of eloquence. The natural, or born orator, speaks from an irresistible impulse, a necessity, an insatiable craving of his nature. His soul is stirred to its depths by the thoughts and feelings that clamor for utterance, and he can no more check their expression than one can check a mountain torrent in its flow. His emotions, like Banquo's ghost, will not "down" at his bidding; he is rather acted upon than acting, and in the height of his frenzy, has no more choice as to what he shall utter than the Sibyl who utters the oracles she is inspired to pronounce. Even when such an orator, on a great occasion, "cons and learns by rote" his ideas and language, he finds it almost impossible to make them run in the groove which he had previously prepared. When the storm is up within him, he is swept onward, in spite of himself, in directions of which he had not dreamed; some of the arguments and illustrations which he had most carefully pre-studied are forgotten, and others more vivid and effective crowd upon him; sentiments, ideas, and fancies, which he was incapable of originating in his cooler moments, flash incessantly on his brain; the whole man is transfigured to the hearers,

and, as they listen to his tones, it seems "as if the trumpet-stop of a grand organ were opened, and the hand of a wizard coursed along its keys." Not so with the rhetorician,—the speaker who owes his power to art. He is not stung and goaded into eloquence by the very impulses of his being. He is never troubled with thoughts that are a torment to him, till they are wreaked upon expression, and reflected from the faces and echoed from the throats of his hearers. His eloquence does not "come like the outbreking of a fountain upon the earth, or the bursting forth of volcanic fires." With him art is not merely an aid to oratory, by which it is decorated and embellished; it is the very fountain from which it flows. He has cultivated and enriched his mind with the most sedulous care. He has drunk at the fountains of modern literature, and distilled the sweetness of the Greek and Roman springs. Not only his thoughts and illustrations, but his very words and tones are carefully pre-studied, and every look and gesture is rehearsed before a glass. All his climaxes and cadences, his outbursts of passion and his explosions of grief, are practiced beforehand, and not a look nor an attitude, not a modulation nor an accent, is left to the inspiration of the moment.

To this class of speakers belongs EDWARD EVERETT, the most consummate rhetorician that America has yet produced.\* Probably not one of our public speakers was ever more conscientious, not to say finical, in his preparation for the rostrum. Nothing with him is left to chance or improvisation; all his oratorical flights, as well as the less ambitious parts of his discourse, are made with "malice

\* For convenience we have placed Everett in the list of "Political Orators," though he more properly ranks as a platform speaker.

prepense and aforethought." Not a word but has been fitted into its place with the precision of each stone in a mosaic; not an epithet but has been weighed in the hair-balance of the most fastidious taste; not a period but has been polished and repolished, and modulated with the nicest art, till it is *totus tere* ~~atque~~ *atque rotundus*, and musical as the tones of a flute. Even his attitudes and gestures have all been carefully practiced in his study, and their precise effect calculated with a critical eye. One of his tricks of delivery was to provide himself beforehand with certain physical objects to which he designed to refer, and hold them at the proper moment to the eyes of his audience. Thus, in delivering the magnificent passage upon Webster, which we have quoted on page 333, as Everett pealed out the words, "his broad pennant streaming at the main," he caught up from the table, as if unconsciously, an elegant flag of the Union, and waved it to and fro amid the shouts of his ravished and enthusiastic hearers. At another time, in an agricultural address, having dwelt in glowing terms upon a New-England product which he declared was brighter and better than California gold, he produced and brandished before the eyes of the people, at the moment when curiosity was on tiptoe, a golden ear of corn. Again, to illustrate a remark, he, on another occasion, put his finger in a tumbler of water, and let a drop trickle off; and, yet again, in an academic address, having spoken of the electric wire which was destined to travel the deep-soundings of the ocean, among the bones of lost Armadas, he "realized" the description by displaying an actual piece of the Submarine Atlantic Cable. Proceeding to compare that wire, murmuring the thought of America through

leagues of ocean, to the printed page, which, he declared, was a yet greater marvel, since it murmured to us the thought of Homer through centuries,—he held up to view a small copy of the “Iliad” and “Odyssey.”

In reading Everett's speeches, you feel that they are the highest triumph of art,—the acme of literary finish,—rhetoric in “its finest and most absolute burnish.” In them we have his thoughts “thrice winnowed,” the ripest and best products of his varied scholarship and his rare genius. It may be said of his oratorical muse, as of Milton's Eve, that “grace is in all her steps.” The only drawback to this kind of oratory is, that it is too apt to lack abandonment, that self-forgetfulness and fervor which are the soul of oratory, and without which, though it may tickle the ear, it does not thrill the heart. It may dazzle you by its flashes of heat lightning, but it never strikes you with the thunderbolt. It is like the music of a fine barrel-organ compared with the ever-varying harmonies of the orchestra. Every one knows that much of the power of an orator depends upon those glowing thoughts and expressions which are struck out in the excitement and heat of debate, and which even the speaker himself is unable afterward to recall. Perhaps the larger part of the poetry of eloquence is of this character. There is a secret magic in the “electric kindling of life between two or more minds,” in the velocities and contagious ardor of debate, which arms a man with new forces, as well as with new dexterity in wielding old ones,—suggesting thoughts, arguments, analogies, and illustrations, which would never have occurred to him in the stillness of the study. De Quincey has remarked that great organists find the same effect of inspiration, the same result of power

creative and revealing, in the mere movement and velocity of their own voluntaries, like the heavenly wheels of Milton, throwing off fiery flakes and bickering flames; these *impromptu* torrents of music create rapturous *fioriture*, beyond all capacity in the artist to register, or afterward to imitate. All the great works of eloquence are, or appear, like those bronze statues which the artist has cast at a single sitting.

Everett is an example of all that can be done by mere rhetorical and elocutionary training to charm and persuade; but no one can doubt that, had nature framed him with a more emotional nature, his achievements would have been greater. He has the art and mechanism of eloquence, rather than its genius; he is the Kemble rather than the Kean of the rostrum. One of his friendly critics quotes the saying of a shrewd old lady concerning John Foster's nominally extemporaneous prayers, that they were "Foster's Stand-up Essays," and adds that, triumphant and charming as these orations are, the hearer never forgets that they are Everett's "Stand-up Essays." It is well known that their author failed in Congress,—not because his speeches were too fine, but because they were not sufficiently condensed for a parliamentary assembly, and because they were rather eloquent pieces of writing than speeches in the proper sense of the term. There is a colossal grandeur and a massive strength in Webster's speeches that remind you of an Egyptian pyramid; the symmetry and classic elegance of Everett call to mind the Greek temple. Everett has no pithy, pointed phrases, like Webster's, in which a whole argument is packed. Choate well said: "Webster's phrases are much more telling than Everett's; they run through

the land like coin." After all, it is the *acer spiritus et vis* that is the first element of oratory. Some Frenchman says: "*L'éloquence continuée ennuit*"; and it is true that, ere long, the honeyed phrases of the mellifluous orator grow wearisome; the flowery style that is mistaken for poetry palls upon us. Again, Everett never impresses you, as do Webster and Clay, with the feeling that the man is more puissant than his periods. His expressions do not suggest a region of thought, a dim vista of imagery, an oceanic depth of feeling, beyond what is compassed by his sentences. He never seems to struggle with language in order to wrest from it words enough for his wealth of thought. It is not an example of "Strength, half leaning on its own right arm," but of Beauty endowed with every natural and artificial charm.

Nevertheless, let us not fail to do justice to Mr. Everett's real merits, for he has many and great ones. The great charm of his orations does not lie in any one trait, but in their symmetry and finish, the proofs they exhibit on every page that they are the products of the most careful culture. The style seems to us the very perfection of the epideictic, or demonstrative style. Artificial it undoubtedly is, and occasionally, though rarely, may betray the artist's tooling; but it is a style formed by the most assiduous painstaking, and polished by a taste as exquisitely sensitive as a blind man's touch. If,—as it has been well said,—it does not snatch a grace beyond the reach of art, it certainly snatches all that are within reach. It is a style which is remarkable alike for its seeming ease and for its flexibility, rising and falling, as it does, with the theme,—now plain and now ornamental,—at one moment swelling in climaxes, and at the next



sinking to its ordinary level,—terse or flowing, pointed or picturesque,—always responding to the dominant mood of the speaker, as the instrument responds to the touch of the master's fingers. Above all, does it thrill and charm by its delicious cadences, some of which linger forever in the ear like strains of delicious music. There are occasional pages of transcendent beauty that one cannot read without a tremor, a shiver in the blood, such as perfect verse sometimes produces. It is for this reason that so many passages from Everett's speeches are treasured in school-books, selected for declamation, and quoted on festal days. He is the very *beau idéal* of a Fourth of July orator. What can be more felicitous than the choice and collocation of the words in the following passages from his addresses?—

“The awful voice of the storm howls through the rigging. The laboring masts seem straining from their base;—the dismal sound of the pumps is heard;—the ship leaps, as it were, madly, from billow to billow;—the ocean breaks, and settles with engulfing floods over the floating deck, and beats with deadening weight against the staggered vessel.”

“Greece cries to us by the convulsed lips of her poisoned, dying Demosthenes; and Rome pleads with us, in the mute persuasion of her mangled Tully.”

“Before the heaving bellows had urged the furnace, before a hammer had been struck upon an anvil, before the gleaming waters had flashed from an oar, before trade had hung up its scales or gauged its measures, the culture of the soil began. ‘To dress the garden and to keep it,’—this was the key-note struck by the hand of God himself in that long, joyous, wailing, triumphant, troubled, pensive strain of life-music which sounds through the generations and ages of our race.”

“They come from the embattled cliffs of Abraham; they start from the heaving sods of Bunker's hill; they gather from the blazing lines of Saratoga and Yorktown; from the blood-dyed waters of the Brandywine; from the dreary snows of Valley Forge, and all the hard-fought fields of the war.”

In glancing over his published volumes, we are struck by the vast number of topics which Everett has treated, and the affluence of learning with which he has illustrated them. Here are elaborate literary addresses before college and academic audiences, anniversary discourses cele-

brating the great battles of the Revolution, Fourth-of-July orations, eulogies on La Fayette and American patriots, as Adams and Jefferson, and John Quincy Adams; lyceum lectures; festival, agricultural, scientific, educational, temperance, charitable, legislative addresses, etc., any one of which shows a wealth of knowledge and a felicity of treatment sufficient to make the reputation of an ordinary speaker. One knows not which most to admire in these discourses, the comprehensive grasp of mind, the power of minute observation, and the strong common sense which they reveal, or the vivid imagination, the glowing fancy, and the exquisite taste, which have caused even the most hackneyed topics to receive a new, intenser, and brighter illumination from his pen. The thoroughly American tone of his historical discourses will strike every reader, as will also the pictorial power with which he depicts past events and scenes. Like certain animals whose color is that of the trees or earth on which they grow, he is always blended and identified with his natal soil.

One of his noblest efforts is his first Phi-Beta-Kappa Oration, delivered at Cambridge in 1824. It was a defense of republican institutions, as affecting the cultivation of letters and science. The orator was then in the flush of early manhood, and astonished all who heard him by the amplitude of his learning, the richness of his fancy, the captivating and luxuriant beauty of his metaphors and tropes, and the witchery of his diction and elocution. The style is polished to the last degree of art, and the concluding passages, particularly the address to Lafayette, stir the blood like the sound of a trumpet. The Plymouth and Concord addresses are also masterpieces of

their kind, and we doubt whether Macaulay, among all his gorgeous pieces of historical painting, has anything more impressive than the celebrated description of the landing of the Pilgrims, or the vivid picture of the death-bed of Copernicus. The eulogy on La Fayette, with its masterly contrast between La Fayette and Napoleon, and the concluding apostrophe to Washington's picture and the bust of La Fayette, abound also in that vigor of conception, that luxuriance of imagery, that felicity of allusion, that beauty of word-painting, and that exquisite rhythmus, which characterize all his productions. He has rifled the gardens, both of ancient and modern literature, of their amaranthine flowers, and their fragrance breathes from every sentence that drops from his pen. All these gifts would have been comparatively unavailing, had his physical gifts not corresponded to them. Happily, Nature did not tantalize him in this way, but gave him a fine, well-proportioned figure, a countenance in which gravity and thoughtfulness were mingled with gentleness, and an eye large and beaming, and dilating, at times, with wonderful lustre. She gave him also, a voice clear and sweet, as well as full, rich, and varied. It was equally fitted to utter the softest tones of pity, and the loftiest accents of indignation; its lowest whisper was distinctly heard in a large hall, and when its full volume rolled over an audience, it was like the swell of an organ. His gestures, too, if not so impressive as those of more impassioned orators, were singularly graceful, expressive, and appropriate. In short, to sum up, Everett's eloquence was marked not so much by any one predominating excellence, as by the fusion of various excellences into one. It was not due to richness of thought, to affluence of fancy, to ripe schol-

arship, to an exquisite sense of the proprieties and harmonies of speech, to silvery tones, or expressive gestures, but to a happy blending of them all,—a union as perfect as the blending of the prismatic colors in a ray of light. He did not merely convince, or move, or charm his hearers, but they were subdued and captivated by an appeal to their reason, heart, and senses, together. To read his addresses, now that his silvery accents are hushed, is a rare pleasure; but to hear them, accompanied by the magic spell of his delivery,—by the cadences and tones, “the swells and sweeps and subsidences of feeling,” the poetry of gesture, attitude, and eye, with which the enchanter sent them home to the mind and heart,—was a felicity which one may no more forget than he can give expression to it in words.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### FORENSIC ORATORS.

IN the long roll of names which have shed lustre on the British bar, there is no one about which clusters more of romance and undying interest than about that of THOMAS ERSKINE. The remarkable circumstances under which he was called to the bar,—the giant strides by which he rose to the very heights of the profession,—the brilliancy of his eloquence,—his profound knowledge of human nature and the workings of human passion,—the singular union in his mind of courage with caution, of coolness and self-possession with enthusiasm,—his rare powers of persuasion,—his elegant physique and personal magnetism,—all have invested the name of this great Nisi Prius leader with a fascination which attaches to that of hardly any other great lawyer, from Sir Thomas More to Sir William Follett. “*Nostræ eloquentiæ forensis facile princeps*,” is the inscription placed upon the fine bust of Lord Erskine by Nollekens, and by universal admission, the defender of Tooke and Stockdale has been awarded the palm over all compeers,—while one of his biographers, himself an occupant of the woolsack, has pronounced him the greatest advocate, as well as the first forensic orator, who ever appeared in any age.

The circumstances of his early life are well known to all. The family to which he belonged was one of ancient

pedigree, and had been remarkably prolific in men of talents, but was now reduced to the very verge of poverty. The means of the Earl of Buchan, his father, had been exhausted in educating his two eldest sons, and the youngest was therefore obliged to start in life with but little training and a scanty stock, if stock it could be called, of classical learning. While at school he exhibited a retentive memory, and when roused by extraordinary stimuli, great capacity for labor; but, on the whole, he was lazy, and gave little promise of future distinction. His playfulness and love of fun, his lively fancy and nimble wit, made him, nevertheless, the favorite of his schoolmates — of all, indeed, who knew him; and when we add to these high social qualities the great natural ability, prodigious capacity of application, and self-confidence amounting to absolute egotism, which he possessed, it is not wonderful, perhaps, that when called to the bar, he was able to place himself in the very front rank of his fellow-gownsmen. At the age of fourteen he became a midshipman in the navy, where he remained four years, till, upon the death of his father, he decided to try his fortune in the army. Being ordered with his regiment to Minorca, and finding himself, at the age of twenty, shut up in a small island, exiled from congenial society, and thrown upon his own resources, he applied himself diligently to study, and to the cultivation of the naturally powerful genius with which he was endowed. Laboriously and systematically he tried to master the English literature, and read thoughtfully the great classics of our language. Milton and Shakspeare were his favorite authors, and he read and re-read their pages, with those of Pope and Dryden, until he had them almost by heart. Returning to England,

he was promoted to a lieutenancy, but grew weary of trudging about from one provincial town to another, especially as he was compelled all the while to keep his family in a barrack-room or in lodgings. Conscious of powers that fitted him to adorn a larger sphere, he chafed against the iron circumstances that hemmed him in, like an eagle against the bars of his cage. At this juncture he chanced to attend a trial before Lord Mansfield, and, while listening with the keenest interest to the arguments of the able counsel, fancied that he could have made a better speech than any of them, on whichever side retained. The thought then struck him that it might not even now be too late to become a lawyer. Acting at once upon this thought with a self-confidence which was itself almost a sure prophecy of success, he was entered in April, 1775, as a student of Lincoln's Inn, and in July, 1778, was called to the bar.

The distinguishing traits of his eloquence were shown, in a large degree, in his very first jury address, which was made in the following November. The circumstances of the case were these: A certain Captain Baillie, a veteran seaman of great worth, who, for his services, held an office at the Greenwich Hospital, discovered in the establishment the grossest of abuses. Having vainly tried to obtain a redress of these evils, he published a statement of the case, severely censuring Lord Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, who, for electioneering purposes, had placed in the Hospital many landsmen. Captain B. was at once suspended by the Board of Admiralty, and, instigated by Lord Sandwich, who himself kept in the background, some of the inferior agents filed against Mr. B. a criminal information for libel. The case excited great

public interest, and the facts were everywhere canvassed. Dining at a friend's house where Captain Baillie was present, Erskine, who was a stranger to the Captain, denounced with great severity the corrupt and scandalous practices imputed to Lord Sandwich. Inquiring who the young man was, Baillie was told that he had just been called to the bar, and had formerly been in the navy,—upon which the Captain at once said, “Then I'll have him for my counsel.” When Michaelmas came round, a brief was delivered to Erskine; but to his dismay he found upon it the names of four senior counsel, and, despairing of being heard after so many predecessors, he gave himself no trouble about the matter. Moreover, the other counsel had so little hope of success that they advised Captain Baillie to pay the costs and escape a trial, as the prosecution had proposed. But Erskine strenuously dissented, and the defendant agreed with him. “You are the man for me,” he said, hugging the young advocate in his arms, “I will never give up.” Once more his star favored him. When the cause came on, the affidavits were so long, and some of the counsel so tedious,—a tediousness aggravated by the circumstance that one of them was afflicted with strangury, and had to retire once or twice in the course of his argument,—that Lord Mansfield adjourned the cause till the next morning, thus giving the young advocate a whole night to arrange his thoughts, and enabling him to address the court when its faculties were awake and freshened.

The next day, the judges having taken their seats, and the court being crowded with an eager audience, to the general surprise “there arose from the back seat a young gentleman whose name as well as whose face was unknown



to almost all present, and who, in a collected, firm, but sweet, modest, and conciliating tone," began his address. After a short exordium, he proceeded to show that his client had written nothing but the truth, and had acted strictly within the line of his duty. He then denounced in that vehement and indignant language of which he afterward proved himself so consummate a master, the injustice which had suspended such a man from office without proof of his guilt, and mentioned Lord Sandwich by name,—when Lord Mansfield interposed, and reminded the counsel that the First Lord of the Admiralty was not before the Court. It was at this critical moment that was manifested for the first time by Erskine that heroic courage which shone forth so conspicuously in all his subsequent career. Unawed by the words or venerable presence of Mansfield, whose word had been law in Westminster Hall for a quarter of a century, the intrepid young advocate burst forth impetuously:

"I know that he is not formally before the court, but, for that very reason, *I will bring him before the court.* He has placed these men in the front of the battle, in order to escape under their shelter, but I will not join in battle with them; their vices, though screwed up to the highest pitch of depravity, are not of dignity enough to vindicate the combat with *me.* I will drag him to light who is the dark mover behind this scene of iniquity. I assert that the Earl of Sandwich has but one road to escape out of this business without pollution and disgrace,—and that is, by publicly disavowing the acts of the prosecutors, and restoring Captain Baillie to his command . . . If, on the contrary, he continues to protect the prosecutors in spite of the evidence of their guilt, which has excited the abhorrence of the numerous audience who crowd this court, if he keeps this injured man suspended, or dares to turn that suspension into a removal, I shall then not scruple to declare him *an accomplice in their guilt, a shameless oppressor, a disgrace to his rank, and a traitor to his trust.*

"My lords, this matter is of the last importance. I speak not as an *advocate* alone,—I speak to you as a *man*,—as a member of the state whose very existence depends upon her naval strength. If our fleets are to be crippled by the baneful influence of elections, *we are lost indeed.* If the seaman, while he exposes his body to fatigues and dangers, looking forward to Greenwich as an asylum for infirmity and old age, sees the gates of it blocked up by corruption, and hears the mirth and riot of luxurious landmen drowning the groans and complaints of the wounded, helpless companions of his glory,—he will tempt the

seas no more. The Admiralty may press his *body* indeed, at the expense of humanity and the constitution, but they cannot press his *mind*; they cannot press the heroic ardor of a British sailor; and, instead of a fleet to carry terror all around the globe, the Admiralty may not be able much longer to amuse us with even the peaceable, unsubstantial pageant of a review. (There had just been a naval review at Portsmouth.) *Fine and imprisonment!* The man deserves a *palace*, instead of a *prison*, who prevents the palace built by the public bounty of his country from being converted into a dungeon, and who sacrifices his own security to the interests of humanity and virtue!"

It is scarcely necessary to say that the decision was for the defendant. The effect produced by this bold and impassioned burst of eloquence was prodigious. Erskine had entered Westminster Hall that morning a pauper; he left it a rich man. As he marched along the hall, after the judges had risen, the attorneys flocked around him with their briefs, and retainer fees rained upon him. From this time his business rapidly increased until his annual income amounted to £12,000. A rise so rapid is hardly paralleled out of the fairy tales of the Arabian Nights. Considering all the circumstances under which the speech was delivered,—that it was the maiden effort of a barrister only just called, and wholly unpracticed in public speaking, before a court crowded with men of the greatest distinction, and of all parties in the state,—that the *débutant* came after four eminent counsel, who might have been supposed to have exhausted the subject,—that he was checked "in mid-volley" by no less a judge than Mansfield,—we do not wonder that Lord Campbell pronounces it "the most wonderful forensic effort of which we have any account in British annals. The exclamation, 'I will bring him before the court!' and the crushing denunciation of Lord Sandwich,—in which he was enabled to persevere from the sympathy of the bystanders, and even of the judges, who, in strictness, ought to have checked his irregularity,—are as soul-stirring as anything in this

species of eloquence presented to us by ancient or modern times."

Mr. Erskine's first important argument before a jury was made in defense of Lord George Gordon, in 1781. His speech in that case sounded the death-knell of constructive treason. Lord Campbell, in speaking of it, says: "Regularly trained to the law, having practiced thirty years at the bar, having been Attorney-General above seven years, having been present at many trials of high treason, and having conducted several myself, I again peruse with increased astonishment and delight, the speech delivered on this occasion. . . . Here I find not only wonderful acuteness, powerful reasoning, enthusiastic zeal, and burning eloquence, but the most masterly view ever given of the English law of high treason, the foundation of all our liberty." It was, however, in the celebrated state trials during the "Reign of Terror," from 1792 to 1806, that Erskine won his highest fame as an advocate,—when by his genius and exertions he obtained verdicts of acquittal in the teeth of a strong government, and rescued, as his friends believed, the public liberties from danger. His speeches for and against Thomas Paine, in defense of Hardy, Horne Tooke, Thelwall, and, above all, the one in defense of Stockdale, are masterpieces of argument and eloquence which have never been surpassed in Europe or America. The latter is admitted by common consent to be the *chef-d'œuvre* of Lord Erskine's orations, and, take it all in all, the most consummate specimen of forensic oratory in our language. What can be finer than the following apology for excess, which is one only of many gems in this oration?

“From minds thus subdued by the terrors of punishment there could issue no works of genius to expand the empire of human reason, nor any masterly compositions on the general nature of government, by the help of which the great commonwealths of mankind have founded their establishments; much less any of those useful applications of them to critical conjunctures, by which, from time to time, our own constitution, by the exertions of patriot citizens, has been brought back to its standard. Under such terrors all the great lights of science and civilization must be extinguished,—for men cannot communicate their free thoughts to one another with a lash held over their heads. It is the nature of everything that is great and useful, both in the animate and inanimate world, to be wild and irregular; and we must be contented to take them with the alloys which belong to them, or live without them. Genius breaks from the fetters of criticism; but its wanderings are sanctioned by its majesty and wisdom when it advances in its path: subject it to the critic, and you tame it into dullness. Mighty rivers break down their banks in the winter, sweeping to death the flocks which are fattened on the soil that they fertilize in the summer,—the few may be saved by embankments from drowning, but the flock must perish for hunger. Tempests occasionally shake our dwellings and dissipate our commerce; but they scourge before them the lazy elements which without them would stagnate into pestilence. In like manner, Liberty herself, the last and best gift of God to his creatures, must be taken just as she is. You might pare her down into bashful regularity, and shape her into a perfect model of severe scrupulous law; but she would then be Liberty no longer,—and you must be content to die under the lash of this inexorable justice, which you had exchanged for the banners of freedom.”

It was in the same speech that he delivered “that victorious and triumphant passage,” as Lord Brougham terms it, “which contributed, doubtless, largely to the deliverance of his client, and will remain an everlasting monument of his own glory, whilst the name of England and its language shall endure”:

“I have been speaking of man and his nature, and of human dominion, from what I have seen of them myself among nations reluctant of our authority. I know what they feel, and how such feelings can alone be repressed. I have heard them in my youth from a naked savage, in the indignant character of a prince, surrounded by his subjects, addressing the governor of a British colony, holding a bundle of sticks in his hands, as the notes of his unlettered eloquence. ‘Who is it,’ said the jealous ruler of the desert, encroached upon by the restless foot of English adventure,—‘who is it that causes to blow the loud winds of winter, and that calms them again in summer? Who is it that causes this river to rise in the mountains, and to empty itself in the ocean? Who is it that rears up the shade of these lofty oaks, and blasts them with the quick lightnings at his pleasure? The same Being who gave you a country on the other side of the waters, and gave ours to us; and by this title we will defend it,’ said the warrior, throwing his tomahawk upon the ground, and raising the war-sound of his nation. These are the

feelings of subjugated man all round the globe; and depend upon it, nothing but fear will control where it is vain to look for affection."

It is interesting to know that the speech upon which Lord Erskine most prided himself, and the recollection of which afforded him during all his life the profoundest satisfaction, was that delivered on the trial of Thomas Paine for his blasphemous work, "The Age of Reason." The speech abounds in gorgeous passages, of which the finest is that in which he bursts into a glowing apostrophe of the devout, holy and sublime spirits who have in all ages held to the faith of God's word, and appeals to the testimony of Hale, Locke, Boyle, Newton, and especially Milton, who, having been deprived of the natural light of the body, enjoyed the clear shining of the celestial day, which enabled him "to justify the ways of God to man." The speech was printed by the Society for the Suppression of Vice, and had an immense circulation, "which gave me," he says, "the greatest satisfaction, as I would rather that all of my other speeches were committed to the flames, or in any manner buried in oblivion, than that a single page of it should be lost."

The question naturally suggests itself, What were the qualities of Erskine's eloquence which made it so profoundly impressive, and enabled him in the outset of his career to place himself by a single bound in advance of all his rivals? A profound lawyer he was not, nor was he well equipped with the learning of the schools. It was not to its rhetorical qualities, to its beauty of diction, its richness of ornament or illustration, its wit, humor, or sarcasm, that his oratory owed its power and charm, but to its matchless strength and vigor. His first great excellence was his devotion to his client, to which all other

considerations were made secondary. Self was forgotten in the character he personated. From the moment the jury were sworn he thought of nothing but the verdict till it was recorded in his favor. The earnestness, the vehemence, the energy of the advocate were ever present throughout his speeches, impressing the arguments upon the mind of the hearer with a force which seemed to compel conviction. He resisted every temptation to mere declamation which his luxuriant fancy cast in his path, and won his verdicts not more by what he said than by what he refrained from saying. Even in the longest of his speeches there is no weakness, no flagging; but the same earnestness of manner, the same lively statement of facts, the same luminous exposition of argument, from beginning to close. Hence it was that his hearers never yawned or went to sleep under his oratory; that after the court and jury had listened for days to witnesses and other barristers, till their endurance was nearly exhausted, he had but to address them for five minutes when every feeling of weariness would vanish, and they would hang spell-bound upon his words. Less deeply versed in the law than many of his rivals, he had a marvellous power of availing himself of the knowledge collected for his use by others. In his speech in defense of the Rights of Juries, he is admitted to have exhibited a depth of learning that would have done honor to Selden or Hale; and so thoroughly had he mastered the materials of his brief which black-letter lawyers had spent months in searching out, that he poured forth all this learning in his argument before the court with the freshness and precision of one who had spent his life in such researches. Grasping all the facts and principles of a case, he never forgot

a decision, an analogy, or the pettiest circumstance which made for his client; while his dexterity in avoiding the difficulties of his case, and in turning to his own advantage the unexpected disclosures which were sometimes made in the course of a trial, was positively wonderful.

Another marked peculiarity of Erskine's oratory was the keen insight which it displayed of the workings of the human mind. He spoke, it has been well said, as his clients would respectively have spoken, if endowed with his genius. Mr. Roscoe, in his "Lives of Eminent British Lawyers," remarks that there never was an advocate who studied with nicer discrimination and more deliberate tact the feelings of a jury than did Erskine. Like every great orator, he was largely dependent upon, and aided by, that sympathy of his hearers which Cicero says is the support and food of a public speaker. "He *felt* his ground inch by inch." Even in his loftiest and most thrilling bursts of oratory, when he was apparently wholly absorbed in his subject, forgetful of all things else, he was intently scanning the faces of the jury, and watching the impression of his speech, as revealed in their changing looks. Guided by this index, he varied the tone of his address; now rising, as he saw the feelings of the jury rise, into impassioned displays of oratory,—now subsiding, as he saw the passions of the jury subside, into cool and temperate argument. His speeches abound in observations which exhibit this remarkable faculty. In his speech on the trial of Lord George Gordon, he exclaimed, "Gentlemen, I see your minds revolt at such shocking propositions!" On the trial of Stockdale he said, "Gentlemen, I observe plainly, and with infinite satisfaction, that you are shocked and offended at my even supposing it possible

that you should pronounce such a detestable judgment." Even after he had sat down, his eye was still on the jury.

The order in which Erskine marshalled his arguments showed a profound knowledge of the human mind, and contributed greatly to their effect. Like a skillful general, he massed his forces on one point of assault. Instead of frittering away the strength of his reasonings, as do so many even able advocates, by arranging them under so many distinct heads, he proposed a great leading principle, to which all his efforts were referable and subsidiary,—which ran through the whole of his address, governing and elucidating every part. As the rills and streams of a valley, whether they run hither or thither, northward or southward, yet meet and mingle at last into one, till the thousand brooks become a torrent, so the arguments, facts, and illustrations in one of these speeches were made to rush together into a common channel, and strike with tremendous impact on the mind. As in attack so in defense; choosing some one strong position, he concentrated upon it all his powers of logic and argument, knowing that if *it* only could be made impregnable, it mattered little what became of minor points,—the defense would infallibly prove fatal to his adversary's case. The effect of this method was not only to strengthen his arguments, but greatly to facilitate their remembrance by his hearers. If he sometimes diverged from the "grand trunk line" of his reasoning, as he occasionally did to relieve the overburdened minds of his hearers, he made even the digression enforce his argument; for from every excursion he brought back some weighty argument or apt illustration which gave to his earnest appeals a new and startling force. While the matter of his speeches



was thus admirably adapted to their object, the manner was equally excellent, the style being the obedient and flexible instrument of the thought. Chaste, polished, and harmonious, it was at the same time full of energy and force, and was equally free from mannerism and from all straining after effect. In simile and metaphor he rarely indulged, still more rarely in wit, but sent his appeals straight home to the reason rather than to the taste and imagination of his auditors. The rhythmus of his sentences, as in those of Grattan, was wondrously beautiful; Lord Campbell attributes much of the charm of his eloquence to "the exquisite sweetness of his diction, pure, simple, and mellifluous,—the cadences not being borrowed from any model, nor following any rule, but marked by constant harmony and variety."

To all these attractions must be added the charms of an elegant person, and a magnetism in the eye which was almost irresistible. "His form was peculiarly graceful, slender, and supple, yet, when warmed by an address, quivering with the pent-up excitement of the occasion. His features were regularly beautiful, and susceptible of infinite variety of expression, and at times lighted up with a smile of surpassing sweetness." Juries, according to Lord Brougham, have declared that they felt it impossible to remove their looks from him, when he had riveted, and, as it were, fascinated them by his first glance; and it used to be a common remark of men who observed his motions, that they resembled those of a *blood-horse*; as light, as limber, as much betokening strength and speed, as free from all gross superfluity or encumbrance.

Of all the lawyers that ever lived, Erskine seems to have made the closest approach to the ideal of a forensic

advocate. In reading his speeches, and thinking of the looks, tones, and action that accompanied their delivery, we are tempted to ask, in the language of Choate concerning Kossuth: "When shall we be quite certain again that the lyre of Orpheus did not kindle the savage native to a transient discourse of reason,—did not suspend the labors and charm the pains of the damned,—did not lay the keeper of the grave asleep, and win back Eurydice from the world beyond the river, to the warm, upper air!" As examples of acute and powerful reasoning, enlivened by glowing eloquence, these speeches are among the grandest of their class in our language; and a profound study of them would do much to correct the leading vices of American oratory. Let the young attorney, in particular, devote his days and nights to analyzing their excellences, till he has mastered the secret of their power; and if, after a microscopic survey of their qualities, he fails to "form to theirs the relish of his soul," and can still delight in "spread-eagleism," we will agree that his faults are incorrigible, and bid him, in the words of Horace, "*stultum esse libenter.*"

America has produced a great number of forensic orators, and among them few have left so great a name as WILLIAM PINKNEY, of Maryland. Unfortunately the fame of his eloquence rests chiefly on tradition, none of his principal speeches having been preserved. He was enthusiastically fond of his profession, and, beyond almost all of his contemporaries, ambitious of its triumphs. Emulation and the love of distinction, even more than his keen appetite for knowledge, were the motives that urged him on in his indefatigable efforts at self-improvement, and they

allowed him no rest while it was possible to increase his intellectual stores. "I never heard him allow," said a friend of his, "that any man was his superior in anything, . . . especially in oratory, on which his great ambition rested." Even when serving his country as a diplomatist in Europe, he applied himself indefatigably to his law studies. All other pursuits, the pleasures of society, and even the repose which nature demands, were sacrificed to this engrossing object. Even after he had accumulated a vast stock of legal knowledge, he approached every new cause with the ardor and zeal of one who had still his reputation to earn. "He was never satisfied," says his biographer, "with exploring its facts, and all the technical learning which it involved." In preparing his speeches, whether for the forum or the Senate, he was equally unsparing of toil. All his life he declaimed much in private, and he carefully premeditated, not only the general order of his speeches, and the topics of illustration, but also the rhetorical embellishments, which last he sometimes wrote out beforehand. To supply himself with these, he noted in his reading every allusion or image that could be turned to use. He piqued himself on his critical knowledge of the English language, of whose structure and vocabulary he had a minute knowledge, if not a thorough mastery. Being mortified, when in England, by his inability to answer some question in classical literature, he resumed his classical studies, and put himself under an instructor to acquire a better knowledge of ancient literature.

In what lay the charm of his oratory, it is not easy to say. The Supreme Court room at Washington was always crowded when he was about to speak, and however dry

the theme, or abstruse his arguments, he held the unflagging attention of his hearers till he sat down. Much of the popular interest in his speaking must have been due to the energy and earnestness of his manner, to his rare command of beautiful and expressive diction, and to the flowers of fancy with which he embellished the most arid and unpromising themes. Rufus Choate regarded him as the most consummate master of a manly and exuberant spoken English that he ever heard, and he had him always in view as a model for imitation. No American advocate ever bestowed more pains upon his manner. He practiced speaking before a mirror, and all his attitudes, gestures, facial expressions, etc., were apparently studied beforehand, to the minutest action. When about to argue a case, he was nervous and restless, burning with a kind of impatient rage for the fray. Professor Ticknor, who saw him once in the Supreme Court, as he was waiting to begin an argument, says that he showed by frequently moving his seat, and by the convulsive twitches of his face, how anxious he was to come to the conflict. "At last the judges ceased to read, and he sprang into the arena like a lion who had been loosed by his keepers on the gladiator who awaited him." His style of elocution was evidently borrowed from no one. Beginning with some timidity, and speaking in low and indistinct murmurs, as if he were conjuring up the spirit of his elocution by muttered incantations, he shook off his embarrassment as he advanced, and, raising his voice to a higher and higher key, was soon borne along on the tide of an impetuous and overwhelming oratory. Both in his senatorial and his forensic speeches, he "spoke with great vehemence, rushing from thought to thought with

a sort of ferocity; his eye fiery, his nostrils distended, and his lips covered with froth, which he would wipe away." His gesture was also peculiar. His right arm was not *brandished* in the usual manner, but "brought in frequent sweeps along his side; his right foot advanced, and his body alternately thrown back as if about to spring, and heaved forward again, as if in act to strike down his adversary; big drops of sweat all the while coursing along their channels from his forehead."

It is evident, from the accounts even of his admirers, that his elocution was too vehement and declamatory for legal discussions, if not for jury addresses, as it is evident, also, that his rhetoric was too stilted and overwrought to merit the highest praise. We are told by his biographer, that Johnson and Gibbon were his favorite English prose-writers; and to his admiration for their elaborate, pompous, and somewhat frigid style, which he thought the proper models for an orator, we may attribute in part the vices of his diction. By a strange paradox, with all his vehemence there was a lack of real fire and fervor; and while his warmth, if it could be called such, was that of the rhetorician, his figures, which were sometimes far-fetched and over-fanciful, "seemed cold, and rather embroidered on the web of his discourse than woven into it." Even in the loftiest and most impassioned climax of his impetuous speech, he seemed never so absorbed in his theme as to be wholly self-forgetful. As with the orator mentioned by Cicero, who, *metuens ne vitiosum, etiam verum sanguinem deperdebat*, his anxiety to appear well was self-defeating; and it was not till at a late period in his life, that he learned to press on with all his energies to the goal, without stopping to pick up the flowers that tempted him on

the way. It was in the discussion, before the Supreme Court, of questions relating to the interpretation of the federal constitution and to international law, that his great abilities appeared to the most signal advantage. His arguments before that "more than Amphictyonic Council" were generally characterized by an earnestness, gravity, eloquence, and force of reasoning, as well as a depth of learning, which were fully proportioned to the magnitude of the occasion, and which convinced all who heard him that he gave expression not merely to the sentiments of the hired advocate, but also to those of the patriot. He was preëminently a legal logician, having, as Rufus Choate truly said, "as fine a legal head as ever was grown in America."

In appearance Pinkney was robust, square-shouldered, and firm-set. He had a somewhat low forehead, and an oval head; with eyes that were changeful in expression, but quickly lighted up by excitement. The habitual expression of his face was mirthful, yet it was deeply furrowed with the lines of thought. The haughtiness of his disposition, which, however, was shown to his peers, never to his inferiors, was manifested in his carriage, of which it has been said that it was more than erect,—it might be called perpendicular. His port at the bar toward his equals was antagonistic and defiant. Always alert and guarded, he granted no favors, and he asked none. "His courtesy in this arena was a mere formula, and rather suggested conflict than avoided it." Few persons of equal ability have been so attentive to the minutest details of their personal appearance. He changed his toilet twice a day, and was always elaborately dressed, without regard to fashion, in the style which he deemed

best fitted to show off his fine person. His nicely brushed blue coat, white waistcoat with gold buttons, snowy-white linen, gold studs, boots shining with the highest polish, little cane twirling in his saffron-gloved fingers, with his air of ease, *abandon*, and "devil-may-care jauntiness," suggested a Brummel or a Beau Nash rather than the giant of the American bar. Not unfrequently, we are told, "he carried his whole array of dandyism into court, and opened his harangue with all his butterfly costume intact, . . . fastidiously dressed at every point." It is even said that he wore corsets to check his growing corpulence, used cosmetics to smooth the roughnesses of his face, and rubbed his body with ointment to stimulate his mental faculties. Probably no advocate that ever lived,—certainly no great advocate,—ever betrayed more fondness for theatrical effects. It was a common trick of his, when called upon to argue a great cause, to plead a want of preparation, though he had been toiling night and day for weeks upon his argument. Sometimes he would show himself at a fashionable party or at a public meeting, the night before he was to speak in court, so as to give the impression that his logic and eloquence were off-hand, and would then go home and spend the whole night in elaborating "impromptu" bursts for the morrow. In spite of all this foppishness and affectation, which were the more unworthy of him as he did not need any such deceptive recommendations, he was one of the giants of the bar and the senate; and "no man," says Wirt, "dared to grapple with him without the most perfect preparation, and the full possession of all his strength."

We have a good specimen of Pinkney's peculiar eloquence in his argument on the famous case of the *Ne-*

*reide*, in which arose the novel question of international law, whether a neutral could lawfully lade his goods on an *armed* enemy's vessel.

"The idea is formed by a union of the most repulsive ingredients. It exists by an unexampled reconciliation of mortal antipathies. It exhibits such a rare *discordia rerum*, such a stupendous society of jarring elements, or (to use an expression of Tacitus) of *res insociabiles*, that it throws into the shade the wildest fictions of poetry. I entreat your Honors to endeavor a personification of this motley notion; and to forgive me for presuming to intimate that, if after you have achieved it, you pronounce the notion to be correct, you will have gone a great way to prepare us, by the authority of your opinion, to receive, as credible history, the worst parts of the mythology of the Pagan world. The Centaur and the Proteus of antiquity will be fabulous no longer. The prosopopœia, to which I invite you, is scarcely, indeed, within the power of fancy, even in her most riotous and capricious mood, when she is best able and most disposed to force incompatibilities into fleeting and shadowy combination; but, if you can accomplish it, will give you something like the kid and the lion, the lamb and the tiger portentously incorporated, with ferocity and meekness coexistent in the result, and equal as motives of action. It will give you a modern Amazon, more strangely constituted than those with whom ancient fable peopled the borders of the Thermidon,—her voice compounded of the tremendous shout of the Minerva of Homer and the gentle accents of an Arcadian shepherdess, with all the faculties and inclinations of turbulent and masculine War, and all the retiring modesty of virgin Peace. We shall have, in one personage, the *pharetrata Camilla* of the Æneid, and the Peneian maid of the Metamorphosis. We shall have Neutrality, soft and gentle, and defenseless in herself, yet clad in the panoply of her warlike neighbors, with the frown of defiance upon her brow, and the smile of conciliation upon her lip,—with the spear of Achilles in one hand, and a lying protestation of innocence and helplessness unfolded in the other. Nay, if I may be allowed so bold a figure in a mere legal discussion, we shall have the branch of olive entwined around the bolt of Jove, and Neutrality in the act of hurling the latter under the deceitful cover of the former."

Of the eloquence of RUFUS CHOATE,—America's greatest forensic advocate, William Pinkney not excepted,—one should have a genius as rare and peculiar as that of Choate himself, to give an adequate description. A more unique and original, not to say odd and eccentric, yet at the same time powerful and effective speaker, never moulded a jury at his will. Neither in his looks, action, language, or style of argumentation, did he copy from or resemble



any other advocate, dead or living. It was our good fortune in 1838, and again in 1847-1856, to hear him both in the courts and the lecture-room; yet never have we been more impressed with the impotence of language than when trying "to wreak upon expression" the impressions made upon us by his extraordinary looks and speech. His tall, robust, erect frame; his rolling, swaying gait, and bilious, coffee-colored, oriental complexion; his haggard, deeply furrowed face; his large, dark, lustrous eyes, lit at times with an unearthly glare, and almost startling one with their burning intensity of expression; his hair, luxuriant, curling, and black as the raven's; his musical voice, now gentle and persuasive, now vehement and ringing; his slouching garments which seemed as if flung upon him, including a cravat which was said "to meet in an indescribable knot that looked like the fortuitous concurrence of original atoms"; all these it is easy to portray singly, but of the "full force and joint result of all" they give no more idea than an alphabet gives of a poem. But when we add to these details, his appearance in the grand climacteric moments, when he was in the full swing of his impetuous oratory, and so absorbed in his theme and isolated from his surroundings as to be in "a sort of trance state," the difficulty of photographing his looks and manner amounts to an impossibility. The vehemence with which he swept on in his argument, like a lightning-express train, pouring out his words so fast that it was said that, if the magnetic telegraph were affixed to his mouth, they would heap upon the wires, yet, all the while, with the coolest method in his fury, scanning every look and motion of the judge and jury; the ever-changing tones of his voice, ranging through all the

notes in the scale, from the lowest audible whisper to a positive scream; the tremulous fingers, long and bony, which he would run through his curling locks, that dripped with perspiration; the clinched fists, which he would now swing in the air, and now shake at his opponent's face; the convulsive jerks of the body with which he would seem to shake every bone in its socket; the triumphant manner in which, after a series of burning sentences, he would straighten up his quivering body, throw his head back, and draw in a full volume of breath through his nostrils with a snuffling that was heard over the whole court-room; his strange habit of doffing and donning three or four different-colored overcoats, in the progress of his speech, according to the degree in which he perspired; his weird wit and arch pleasantry; his grotesque exaggeration; his multiplication of adjectives, as when he spoke of a harness as "a safe, sound, substantial, suitable, second-rate, second-hand harness," or spoke of the Greek mind as "subtle, mysterious, plastic, apprehensive, comprehensive, available," (a dissertation in six words); his labyrinthine sentences, his cumulative logic by which one idea, image, or argument, was piled upon another, so as to make up an overwhelming mass; his gorgeous, many-colored rhetoric,—all together simply beggar description.

Probably no orator ever lived who threw himself with more energy and utter abandonment into the advocacy of a cause. When addressing a jury, his whole frame was charged with electricity, and literally quivered with emotion. The perspiration stood in drops even upon the hairs of his head; and he reminded one of the pythoness upon her tripod. Sometimes he was so racked and exhausted by a forensic speech that he could hardly stagger,

without aid, to his carriage; and often, though he had an iron frame, he would be tormented with sick headache, to which he was all his life a martyr, for several days afterward. In addressing the bench, on the other hand, he was so quiet and subdued in manner as to appear like another being. Probably there never was an advocate in whose brain more opposite elements were united. At one moment he burns with a tropical heat, the next he is as cool as an iceberg. Keenly sensitive to the slightest impressions, he has as perfect a self-control as a veteran swordsman. Hurrying other men along in a whirlwind of passionate declamation, he holds his own feelings all the while in check with as complete a mastery as if, like drilled and veteran troops, they had been taught to be "impetuous by rule." Mr. E. P. Whipple acutely observes that it is one of Choate's peculiarities that he combines a conservative intellect with a radical sensibility,—that he is a kind of Mirabeau-Peel; and this is doubtless the happiest solution of the strange anomalies and puzzling contradictions in his character. He is one of the few men who have triumphantly achieved that feat which, Emerson once said in the "Dial," is the tragedy of genius,—attempting to drive along the ecliptic with one horse of the heavens and one horse of the earth,—the result of which is almost always discord and ruin and downfall to chariot and charioteer. With an imagination of intense vividness and preternatural activity, Choate was as practical as the most sordid capitalist that ever became an "incarnation of fat dividends."

Beginning his legal career at Danvers and Salem, Mass., chiefly with the practice of criminal law, he rose rapidly in his profession, till he had no superior in the state or

nation. It is said that the Irish advocate, Plunket, once defended a horse-stealer in a country town of his circuit with such consummate tact that all the thieves in the court-room were in an ecstasy of delight, and one of them, unable to control his admiration, burst out into an exclamation, "Long life to you, Plunket! The first horse I steal, boys, by Jekers, I'll have Plunket!" The criminals of Essex county must have cherished a similar enthusiastic admiration for Choate, for his success in clearing them was such that the attorney-general declared that the days of the Salem witchcraft had returned again. When Choate moved to Boston, all the veteran practitioners of the bar looked askance and shook their double chins at him, saying of his unique style of speaking, as did Jeffrey of Wordsworth's poetry, "This will never do"; the public, too, laughed at his vehemence of gesture and droll exaggeration; but when it was found that there was "a method in his madness,"—that all these seeming oddities were simply means to an end,—that he was aiming to keep the jurors' attention alive, and that beneath the roses and flowers there was hidden a blade of Damascus steel,—above all, when they found that by some inexplicable witchcraft of manner or sorcery of speech he won verdict after verdict which their "coldly correct and critically dull" addresses failed to extort,—they changed their tone. "If I live," he wrote one day in his diary, "all the block-heads which are shaken at certain mental peculiarities shall know and feel a lawyer, a reasoner, and a man of business"; and live he did to confound all gainsayers, and make "those who came to scoff remain" to praise.

In his happiest days, to hear him argue a cause to a jury was regarded even by the most cultivated critics of

the American Athens as an intellectual feast. The flowers of fancy which he scattered along the pathway of his rapid and vivid speech; the profusion of analogies, real and fanciful, with which his teeming fancy fortified every proposition, and illustrated every theme; the choice, felicitous, and often recondite language gathered from books and the market-place; the charming literary, biographic, and historic allusions; the ingenious and apt illustrations; the sudden flashes of wit; the electric bursts of humor; the "quick, trampling interrogations with which he assailed an antagonist proposition, and gave to his argument an almost muscular power"; the rapid transition from pleasantry to pathos, from subtle analysis and searching logic to grand outbursts of sentiment, which uplifted the souls of his hearers, and invested them for the moment with a portion of the orator's own greatness,—all these were elements in the composition of that complex and indescribable eloquence whose spell was felt equally by judge and juror, by scholar and clown, and to which no one could listen unmoved unless he was either "a yahoo or a beatified intelligence." It mattered little how obscure the arena or how small the circle of hearers, in which and to whom he spoke. In the office of a justice of the peace, or before two or three referees in the hall of a country tavern, he would squander the same treasures of learning, the same affluence of diction, the same felicity of allusion, the same frenzy of feeling, as when he spoke before the most learned and august tribunal or the most lettered audience.

It has been justly said that though his style lacked simplicity, and suggested by its richness and luxuriance an oriental origin, yet it was wonderfully well adapted to its purpose, and never failed to be poetic and suggestive.

One who was apparently a frequent listener to his enchanting rhetoric, speaks of his discoursing to a jury sometimes "in tones that linger on the memory like the parting sound of a cathedral bell, or the dying note of an organ. Thrilling it can be as a fife, but it has often a plaintive cadence, as though his soul mourned, amid the loud and angry tumults of the forum, for the quiet grove of the academy, or in these times sighed at the thought of those charms and virtues which we dare conceive in boyhood, and pursue as men,—the unreachèd paradise of our despair." And yet, strange to say, with all his poetry and pathos, his soarings of fancy and his flights of rhetoric, it was not in these that lay his principal power. Though he had, as Edward Everett said, "an imagination that rose with easy wing to the highest invention of invention," yet it was mainly his dialectic skill that won his victories. In a dry law-argument, hinging on purely technical points, he could be, Judge Sprague declared, "learned, logical, and profound, or exquisitely refined and subtle," as the occasion required. In his arguments, not only was each topic presented in all its force, but they were all arranged and dovetailed with the most consummate skill so as to furnish a mutual support.

During a trial, nothing, in his most passionate moments, escaped his eagle-eyed vigilance. One day a lady, in going out, made some noise by the rustling of her silk dress. Being asked if he noticed it, Mr. Choate said: "Notice it! I thought forty battalions were moving!" While he was as quick as a hawk to detect a fallacy, he could be as slow as a ferret in pursuing a sophism through all its mazes and sinuosities. No lawyer, when there was a hitch or a blot in his cause, could keep it more dexterously out of

view, and hurry it more trippingly over; and yet, if the blot was on the other side, he had the eye of a lynx and the scent of a hound to detect and run down his game. With all his profusion of language, every word was used with discriminating accuracy, and had its precise shade of meaning, which made it necessary to the picture he drew. Though he spoke at times in thunder tones, yet his most telling points were often made in a low conversational voice. In a cause in which we were a witness, wishing to call attention to a significant point in the testimony, he stepped in front of the foreman, and said in low fireside tones: "About this time, gentlemen of the jury, you will remember that this S—— was seen taking the cars for K-e-e-n-e, N-e-w H-a-m-p-s-h-i-r-e. *Stick a pin THERE, Mr. Foreman.*" Afterward, in denouncing the same person, whom he justly suspected to be the real plaintiff in the case, he called the attention of the jury to "the spectacle of a witness burning and freezing with all the feelings of a client," and again thundered out: "When he passed this check to my clients, he *knew*, gentlemen, that he was a bankrupt; he *knew* that he was a drowning man catching at straws; he *knew* that he was *not worth the shirt he stood in*,—that, had he died at that moment, his estate would not have yielded enough *to defray his funeral charges.*"

No advocate ever scanned more watchfully the faces of his hearers while speaking. By long practice he had learned to read their sentiments as readily as if their hearts had been throbbing in glass cases. In one jury address of five hours, he hurled his oratorical artillery for three of them at the hard-headed foreman, upon whom all his bolts seemed to be spent in vain. At last, the iron

countenance relaxed, the strong eyes moistened, and Choate was once more master of the situation. Another of his peculiarities was the "fertility of his mind in possibilities and plausibilities," his infinity of resources in an unexpected emergency, or sudden turn of a cause,—the coolness, tact, and facility with which, like Napoleon at Rivoli, after his lines had been forced at all points, and the day had apparently gone hopelessly against him, he would change his front, rearrange his order of battle, and, with the air and bearing of one who scents a coming triumph, prepare for a fresh and fiercer onslaught on his astonished antagonist.

In his literary discourses, on academic and other occasions, Mr. Choate's style differed materially from his style in the court-room. One of its most marked peculiarities was the enormous length and complexity of the sentences, some of which had as many joints as a boa-constrictor. The interminable journey on which he sometimes drove his "substantive and six" before he overtook the verb that completed the sense and the sentence, could only be paralleled by the wanderings of Japhet in search of his father, or the never-ending travels of the Wandering Jew. Sometimes, in listening to him, one thought of Satan's flight through chaos, as depicted in "Paradise Lost":

"O'er bog or steep, through straight, rough, dense, or rare,  
With head, hands, wings, or feet, pursues his way,  
And swims or sinks, or wades or creeps, or flies."

Reporters complained bitterly of the difficulty of straightening out his sentences. You set out with him, they said, in hope and trust, and get on well over flowery meadows, and through mountains and thunder-storms, feeling several shocks of earthquake, and seeing two or three volcanic



eruptions; but by the time he is ready to wind up the journey, you are so lost in the mazes of his diction, and so spell-bound by the grandeur and glory of his triumphal progress, that you have lost all sight of the starting-point; and, even if you can catch a faint glimpse of it, cannot distinguish the beginning from the middle, nor the middle from the end. There is a mythical story of a stenographic reporter, which, perhaps, only burlesques an actual fact, that having been so magnetized by the orator on one occasion that he dropped his pencil, and simply listened in mute astonishment, he excused his neglect by saying, "Who can report chain-lightning?"

It must not be supposed, however, that in his literary and political addresses he dealt exclusively in these elephantine sentences. As Mr. Everett happily says, "his style is as often marked by a pregnant brevity as by a sonorous amplitude. He is sometimes satisfied in concise, epigrammatic clauses, to skirmish with his light troops and to drive in the enemy's outposts. It is only on fitting occasions, when great principles are to be vindicated and solemn truths told; when some moral or political Waterloo or Solferino is to be fought, that he puts on the entire panoply of his gorgeous rhetoric. It is then that his majestic sentences swell to the dimensions of his thought; that you hear afar off the awful roar of his rifled ordnance; and when he has stormed the heights and broken the centre, and trampled the squares, and turned the staggering wings of the adversary, that he sounds his imperial clarion along the whole line of battle, and moves forward with all his thoughts in one overwhelming charge."

Dryden says of Virgil, that such is the magic of his

style that he makes even his husbandmen toss the dung with an air of dignity. In like manner the imagination of Choate transfigured the meanest things, and depicted the commonest acts in words that haunt the memory. Thus, in speaking of the skipper of a vessel, who was looking into a law-book while passing the island of St. Helena, he said: "Such were his meditations as the invisible currents of the ocean bore him by the grave of Napoleon." Of a client whom a witness found crying, and who, when asked what was the matter, replied, "I'm afraid I've run against a snag," Choate said: "Such were his feelings and such his actions down to that fatal Friday night, when, at ten o'clock, in that flood of tears, his hope went out like a candle." Again, speaking of a person who hesitated to commit a small offense when contemplating a greater crime, "Is it possible," he asked, "to think rationally that if a person was going to plunge into a cataract below the precipice, he would be over-careful not to moisten his feet with dew?" Of a witness' statement he declared that it was "no more like the truth than a pebble is like a star; or," he added after a pause, "a witch's broomstick is like a banner-stick." Of an unseaworthy vessel he declared: "The vessel, after leaving the smooth water of Boston harbor, encountered the eternal motion of the ocean, which has been there from creation, and will be there till land and sea shall be no more. She went down the harbor a painted and perfidious thing, but soul-freighted, a coffin for the living, a coffin for the dead."

The wit of Choate was as unique as everything else belonging to his singular genius. The effects it produced were owing partly to the queer association of opposite ideas, and partly to the solemn and dignified, and some-

times sepulchral utterance with which he would mask the point of a joke. When a counsel in a patent case said to him, "There's nothing original in your patent; your client did not come at it *naturally*," Choate replied, with a half-mirthful, half-scornful look: "What does my brother mean by *naturally*? Naturally! We don't do anything *naturally*. Why, *naturally* a man would walk down Washington street with his pantaloons off!" One day he was interrupted in an argument by a United States judge, and told that he must not assume that a certain person was in a large business, and had made many enemies,—that he was a physician, and not in business. "Well, then," replied Choate, instantly, with a merry twinkle of the eye, "he's a physician, and the friends of the people he's killed by his practice are his enemies." Of one of his female clients he said: "She is a sinner,—no, not a sinner, for she is our client; but she is a very disagreeable saint." Not only does his wit exercise itself upon subjects intrinsically ludicrous, but even into his gravest utterances upon the most serious themes there is often injected a vein of humor or drollery which affects one like a jest on a gravestone, or in a ledger. Sometimes this is done unconsciously, and sometimes it is accompanied with a merry twinkle,—a queer, quizzical look,—a kind of subdued chuckle, or inaudible crow,—indicating a consciousness that the jest is good. In a railroad case the person injured by the collision of the cars with his wagon, was declared by a witness to have been intoxicated at the time he was driving. When cross-examined, the witness said he knew it, because he leaned over him, and found by his breath that "he had been drinking gin and brandy." Commenting on this testimony, Choate said: "The witness swears he stood by

the dying man in his last moments. What was he there for?" he thundered out.—"Was it to administer those assiduities which are ordinarily proffered at the bedside of dying men? Was it to extend to him the consolations of that religion which for eighteen hundred years has comforted the world? No, gentlemen, no! He leans over the departing sufferer; he bends his face nearer and nearer to him,—and what does he do?"—(raising his voice to a yet higher key)—"What does he do? *Smells gin and brandy!*" Of the bankruptcy of a dry-goods merchant, he said: "So have I heard that the vast possessions of Alexander the Conqueror crumbled away in dying dynasties, in the unequal hands of his weak heirs."

A good illustration of his peculiar exaggeration is furnished by a passage in his speech before a committee of the Massachusetts legislature on the disputed boundary question between that state and Rhode Island: "I would as soon," said he, in a nervous tone and with startling energy, "think of bounding a sovereign state on the North by a dandelion, on the West by a blue-jay, on the South by a hive of bees in swarming time, and on the East by three hundred foxes with firebrands tied to their tails, as of relying upon the loose and indefinite bounds of commissioners a century ago." Touching his marvelous copiousness of style, it used to be said by the Boston wits that he "drove a substantive and six"; and it is related that when Chief-Justice Shaw, of Massachusetts, was told that a fresh edition of Worcester's dictionary was coming out, with five thousand new words, he said: "For heaven's sake, *don't let Choate hear of it!*" He not only multiplied, but sometimes repeated adjectives and other words with telling effect,—as when in a will case, im-

pugning the testator's sanity, he closed a statement of the facts tending to establish the insanity with the sorrowing cadence: "No, gentlemen of the jury, the *mind* of Oliver Smith never signed that paper. That mind was dead,—dead,—dead." Repeating the word each time with a slower and sadder articulation, he made a profound impression.

One of Choate's most marvellous gifts was his power of so emphasizing a point verbally that a jury would see it clear into the roots of their optic nerves. A good example of this is a passage in his speech in the Tirrell case: A witness against the prisoner (whom Choate was defending), having been absent, was called out of turn, and after the defense was in. Commenting upon this procedure, Mr. Choate said: "*Where* was this tardy and belated witness, that he comes here to tell us all that he *knows*, and all that he *doesn't* know, eight and forty hours after the evidence for the defense has been closed? Is the case so obscure that he has never heard of it? Was he ill, or in custody? Was he in Europe, Asia, or Africa? Was he on the Red Sea, or the Yellow Sea, or the Black Sea, or the Mediterranean Sea? Was he at Land's End, or John O'Groat's northeastern boundary, drawing and defining that much vexed line? Or was he with General Taylor and his army, or wherever the fleeting southwestern boundary line of this expanding country may at any time happen to be? No, gentlemen, he was at none of these places—comparatively easy of access; but,—and I would emphasize upon your attention, Mr. Foreman, the fact, and urge it upon your consideration,—he was in that more incontinent, more inaccessible region,—so hard to come at, and from which so few travelers return,—Roxbury!" (Roxbury adjoined Boston.)

## CHAPTER XIII.

### PULPIT ORATORS.

IF one were asked who was the greatest pulpit orator that ever lived, it would be a nice question to determine, so various are the styles of sacred eloquence, and so different are the tastes of even the most competent judges. But if we were to judge by the effects produced, we should hardly need to hesitate in pronouncing GEORGE WHITEFIELD the Demosthenes of the pulpit. In reading his printed sermons, as in reading the speeches of Fox or Sheridan, we are utterly puzzled to account for their electrical effect. One of the latest biographers of the great preacher, Mr. Gledstone, is compelled to confess their "tameness," their "feeble thought and unpolished language"; and though, among the extracts he has given, there are a few striking and dramatic passages, they are neither numerous or powerful enough to discredit his statement. When pressed to print his sermons, Whitefield might well have answered with a popular French divine, "Gladly, provided that you print the preacher." Yet no fact in the history of eloquence is better attested than the overpowering effects of Whitefield's oratory. Even in his youth, when, being but twenty-one years of age, and deeming himself unfit for the pulpit, he had "prayed, and wrestled, and striven with God," that he might not yet be called to preach, complaint was made to his bishop

that he had driven fifteen persons mad by his very first sermon,—to which the worthy prelate replied that “he hoped the madness might not be forgotten before the next Sunday.”

For thirty years Whitefield was listened to with breathless interest in both hemispheres. His preaching tours, it has been truly said, were often like triumphal processions, in which he was escorted by bands of enthusiastic horsemen from place to place, and awaited at every halt by crowds of insatiate listeners, who could never have enough of his heartfelt oratory. Shut out from the English churches, he turned to the open fields,

“To that cathedral, boundless as our wonder,  
Whose quenchless lamps the sun and moon supply,  
Its choir the winds and waves, its organ thunder,  
Its dome the sky,”

and there, with the hillside for his pulpit, harangued the men, women, and children, who came trooping from north, south, east, and west, even before daylight, to hear him. Preaching four times on Sunday, and on every day of the week, talking sometimes from seven in the morning till late at night, he showed no signs of exhaustion, but everywhere and at all times subdued and charmed men by the spell of his fervid oratory. At Kingswood, Kensington, and other places, audiences of twenty, thirty, and even forty thousand, hung for hours on his lips; sometimes through pelting rain, or far into the night, standing around him as if entranced, and unable to tear themselves away; and over all these vast assemblies he ruled supreme, at his will hushing them into awe-struck silence, or melting them to tears, or drawing from them cries and groans that almost drowned his voice.

At Bristol, where the Bishop threatened him with ex-

communication, if he should dare to wag his tongue in the diocese, his triumphs were no less signal. Before day the people might be seen going with lanterns to hear him; and so vast was the throng, that men clung to the rails of the organ-loft, and climbed to every accessible place to get within reach of his voice. Even the rude colliers of the mining-regions, and the rabble of Moorfields,—a motley crowd of mountebanks, merry-andrews, and persons of the vilest character,—attested his spiritual triumphs. In spite of a furious opposition, and though the whole field, as he said, “seemed ready, not for the Redeemer’s, but for Beelzebub’s harvest”; though missiles of the most offensive kind were hurled at him, and he was lashed at by a whip, assaulted with a sword, and his voice drowned at times by drums and trumpets; he preached for three days to a throng of twenty-five thousand persons, of whom three hundred and fifty were converted, and a thousand pricked in their consciences during the first twenty-four hours!

Among the wary and thoughtful Scotch the excitement was no less intense. In vain did sectarian narrowness oppose his efforts; in vain did the Presbyterians denounce the revivals that followed his preaching as “a wark of the deevil,” stigmatize him as “a false Christ,” and even keep a fast on the occasion of his reappearance; the people flocked by thousands to hear him, and the stoutest hearts shook and trembled under his impassioned and electric appeals. On one occasion, we are told, as the night darkened over his vast audience, his word went through it like a shot piercing a regiment of soldiers, casting many to the ground, groaning and fainting under the vehemence of their emotions. Nor was this only when they were led by the great preacher to Sinai, and saw the



lightnings flash and heard the thunders roar; far greater numbers were overcome when told, in the tenderest accents, of redeeming love. Fourteen times he visited "Auld Scotia" with the same results; and so happy was he there, that he called the day of his departure *execution day*.

Crossing the Atlantic thirteen times, he spent nine years in "hunting for sinners in the wilds of America," and everywhere with the same results. At Boston, at New York, at Philadelphia, at Charleston, his words fell like a hammer and like fire on all who heard him. Some who listened to him were struck pale as death, others sank into the arms of their friends, and others lifted up their eyes to heaven and cried out to God for mercy. "I could think of nothing," he says on one of these occasions, "when I looked upon them, so much as the great day. They seemed like persons awakened by the last trump, and coming out of their graves to judgment." Opposition, instead of checking, only increased the impetuous flow of his speech. The men who came to scoff or jeer, speedily found that he was superior to the passions of his audience, and either submitted to the spell of his oratory, or slunk away cheated of their sport.

Nor was Whitefield, as Dr. Johnson supposed, merely the orator of the mob. Not only the unlettered, but men of the highest culture, yielded to the fascination of his speech. The cold, skeptical Hume declared that he would go twenty miles on foot to hear Whitefield preach; and in his chapel might be seen the Duke of Grafton, not yet pierced by the arrows of Junius, the heartless George Selwyn, Lord North, Charles James Fox, William Pitt, and Soame Jenyns. John Newton, the friend of Cowper, used to get up at four in the morning to hear the great

preacher at five; and he says that even at that early hour the Moorfields were as full of lanterns as the Haymarket of flambeaux on an opera night. So great, at last, was the spell, that, "when the scandal could be concealed behind the well-adjusted curtain, 'e'en mitred auditors would nod the head.'" Even the calm and unimpassioned Franklin caught fire at Whitefield's burning words; and perhaps no more signal proof of the orator's power could be given than its triumph over the prudence of Poor Richard. Whitefield had consulted Franklin about the location of a proposed orphan house, but had refused to adopt his advice, and thereupon Franklin decided not to subscribe. "I happened soon after," he says, "to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give him the copper. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give the silver, and he finished so admirably that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all."

The same sermon was heard by a friend of Franklin's, who, agreeing with him about the location of the house, had, as a precaution, emptied his pockets before he came from home. But, before the discourse was ended, he begged a neighbor, who stood near him, to lend him some money for a contribution. If any men could have resisted the preacher's spell, it must have been the haughty and brilliant Bolingbroke, and the worldly and fastidious Chesterfield; yet the former, we are told, was once deeply

moved; and the icy decorum and self-possession of the latter were, on one occasion, as completely overpowered as if he had been an English collier or a Welsh miner. The preacher had presented the votary of sin under the figure of a blind beggar, led by a little dog. The dog breaks his string. The old man, with his staff between both hands, unconsciously gropes his way to the edge of a frightful precipice. Step by step he advances; he feels along with his staff; it drops down the descent, too far to send back an echo; his foot trembles on the ledge; another moment, and he will fall headlong into the valley below,—when up starts the peer, crying out in an agony, as he springs forward to save him, “Good God! he is gone!”\*

What was the secret of this marvellous power? It lay partly in his extraordinary dramatic faculty, and partly in his burning love for the souls of sinful men. He was not a learned man, nor was he a profound and original thinker. He had apparently no Hebrew and little Greek, and was acquainted neither with scholastic divinity nor with the great divines of modern times. But he was profoundly in earnest, and concentrating all his faculties of mind, soul, and body, upon one great end, forgot everything else in his intense desire for the salvation of his fellow men. When to this was added the charm of his exquisite voice and delivery, the combination was irresistible. Whitefield had a rare dramatic genius, and it was

\* A similar testimony was once borne to the eloquence of Dr. Kirk, of Boston. Once, says Dr. R. S. Storrs, in his “Preaching without Notes,” when Dr. Kirk was preaching at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, . . . “he described the way of worldly pleasure and gain, without thought of God, as a smooth broad road, along whose easy and gradual slopes men carelessly walked, till they came on a sudden to the precipice at the end; and so vivid was the final image, as it flashed from his mind upon the assembly, that when he depicted them going over the edge, a rough-looking man . . . rose in his place, and looked over the gallery front, to see the chasm into which they were falling.”

aided by every other gift that could lend it force. To a fine person and an expressive countenance, was added a voice of unequalled depth and compass, whose ever-changing melodies, as it swept over the whole scale of modulation, could be heard by thirty thousand hearers, and for the distance of nearly a mile. It could thunder like Sinai, or whisper like a zephyr, and its tones of pathos were such that the words, "O the wrath to come" were sufficient to bring tears to the eyes of a vast audience. To these physical gifts were added an emotional temperament scarcely ever possessed by any other man,—a temperament which would at one moment break out into passionate weeping, and at the next flash into lofty indignation, or melt into contagious tenderness,—and a felicity of gesture which gave significance to every sentence, and brought before his audience each scene that he described as vividly as if it had been present to their eyes.

His vehemence, especially, was a marked feature of his preaching. A poor man said that he preached like a lion. Sometimes he stamped, sometimes he wept, sometimes he stopped, exhausted by emotion, and appeared almost ready to expire. Of him it might be said, as of an early German reformer, *viduus vultus, vividi oculi, vividae manus, denique omnia vivida*. Besides all this, Whitefield had cultivated the histrionic art to a degree rarely attained by the most eminent men who have trodden the stage. Foote and Garrick heard him often, and they both declared that his oratory was not at its full height until he had repeated a discourse forty times. Weeding out from his sermons every weak and ineffective passage, and retaining all the impressive ones, he gradually improved them to the uttermost; while his delivery was so improved by frequent repe-

tition,—every accent, every emphasis, every modulation of the voice, was so perfectly toned,—that, according to Franklin, the effect was like that of beautiful music. So perfect was his dramatization, that the public, instead of calling him the Garrick of the pulpit, paid him the far higher compliment of calling Garrick the Whitefield of the stage.

In his art of rhetoric, apostrophe and personification, which quickened the coldest abstractions into life, held the first place. On one occasion, after a solemn pause, he told his hearers that the attendant angel was about to leave the sanctuary and ascend to heaven. “And shall he ascend,” cried the preacher, “and not bear with him the news of one sinner, among all this multitude, reclaimed from the error of his ways?” Here he stamped with his foot, lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, and cried aloud: “Stop! Gabriel, stop! ere you enter the sacred portals, and yet carry with you the news of one sinner converted to God!” This bold apostrophe to an imaginary being, as to a real messenger between earth and heaven, was accompanied with such animated yet natural action, that the philosophic Hume declared that it surpassed anything he had ever seen or heard in any other preacher.

At another time, after exclaiming, “Look yonder! What is that I see?” he depicted the Savior’s agony in the garden so vividly, that it seemed to be passing before the eyes of the congregation. “Hark! hark! do you not hear?” he exclaimed, as if it were not difficult to catch the sound of the Savior praying. Though this passage was again and again repeated in his addresses, it impressed those who knew what was coming, as though they heard it for the first time. Sometimes at the close of a sermon, we

are told, he would personate a judge about to perform the last awful duty of his office. With his eyes full of tears, and an emotion that made his speech falter, after a pause which kept the whole audience in breathless expectation of what was to come, he would proceed: "I am now about to put on my condemning cap. Sinner, I must do it: I must pronounce sentence upon you!" and then, in a tremendous strain of eloquence, describing the eternal punishment of the wicked, he would recite the words of Christ; "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." When he related how Peter, after the cock crew, went out and wept bitterly, he had always a fold of his gown ready in which to hide his face. We have already mentioned how he startled the fastidious Chesterfield by his pictorial power. An equally great oratorical conquest was that in New York, when, preaching to the seamen, he described in thrilling language a ship dismantled and thrown on her beam ends by a squall, and at the exclamation, "What next?" they rose to their feet as one man, shouting out in their excitement, "The long boat! take to the long boat!"

All this may be called acting, and, in a certain sense, it was acting that has never been surpassed. But it was more than acting, for the man personated no emotion, uttered no sentiment, which from the depths of his heart he did not feel. It was out of a soul at white heat, consumed by the love of other souls, that these impersonations sprang; and the more they offend our taste at times, the more they shock our ideas of the solemnity that belongs to holy things, the more exquisite must have been the skill which made them appear the lofty

and irrepressible outbursts of a mind carried away by its conceptions. Had Whitefield not been a Christian and a philanthropist, his tastes, in all probability, would have led him to the stage, where he would have rivalled or eclipsed Garrick.

Though Whitefield's sermons were repeated again and again in his travels, even for the hundredth time, yet no speaker was ever quicker to seize upon any passing incident, and turn it to account. If a storm was gathering, the shadows flitting across his field congregations were emblems of human life; the heavy thunder-cloud and the flash of lightning were emblems of the day of wrath; and the rainbow that spanned the sky spoke of the grace that offered salvation in Jesus Christ. A scoffer's levity would point a stern rebuke; and the penitential tear trickling down a sinner's cheek would prompt a word of loving encouragement.

It was this deep sympathy for his hearers, this intense love of sinful human souls, that was the great secret of Whitefield's power. Without it, neither his energy, nor his eloquence, nor his marvellous dramatic gifts, nor all these united, would have enabled him to work a tithe of the miracles he did. "If ever philanthropy burned in the human heart with pure and intense flame," says Sir James Stephen, "it was in the heart of George Whitefield." It was not the theology of his sermons, which was often hard, literal, and gross, but the preacher's spirit, that won the people's ear and heart. Plentifully "dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love," he lived and toiled, not for self, but for his dying fellow-men. Love, as one of his latest biographers says, is more than theology, both with God and man, and

love was never absent from any sermon of Whitefield. He had no preference but for the poor, the ignorant, and the miserable. In their cause, as they plainly saw, he shrank from no privation, and declined neither insult nor hostility; in their behalf, if necessary, he would gladly have died. It was the perception of this fact which, even more than his passionate oratory, melted the murderous miners at Cornwall, and caused tears to run "in white gutters down the black faces of the colliers, black as they came out of the coal-pits," at Kingwood.

It is doubtful whether any other preacher ever impressed his hearers with so profound a conviction of his disinterested love for them, as Whitefield impressed on the hearts of the thousands that hung upon his lips. They knew that it was for no selfish end that he was wearing himself out in behalf of frail, sorrowing, perplexed, and dying men; that, with the exception of brief intervals of repose, his whole life was consumed, so to speak, in the delivery of one continuous or scarcely interrupted sermon. "The parochial clergyman, in return for his tithes, was content to give his parishioners a single discourse one day in the week, under the delivery of which some of them were looking impatiently at the clock, others thinking of the price of stocks or the prospects of the next crop, and others sleeping. But here was a man who, without pay, was spending his life between the saddle on which he hurried from one congregation to another, and the pulpit from which he addressed them, and was preaching in words of fire all over the kingdom, at the rate of forty and often sixty hours a week,—filling up the intervals with prayers and intercessions and spiritual songs,—and who called it being



put on short allowance, when, to save him from utter exhaustion, he was limited to one a day and three times on Sunday.\* And when this man stood before them, pouring out his soul in the most impassioned entreaties and appeals, with floods of tears, it was no wonder that a sympathetic thrill passed from heart to heart, and rugged natures were subdued, and long-sealed eyes learned to weep."

Once, and once only, we are told, did one of Whitefield's hearers fall asleep. It was an old man, who sat in front of the pulpit, when the preacher was discoursing on a rainy day to a rather drowsy congregation in New Jersey. Instead of sitting down and weeping, as Dr. Young did in a royal chapel under similar circumstances, the preacher stopped; his face darkened with a frown; and, changing his tone, he cried out: "If I had come to speak to you in my own name, you might rest your elbows on your knees, and your heads upon your hands, and sleep, and once in a while look up and say, 'What does the babbler talk of?' But I have not come to you in my own name. No: I have come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts,"—here he brought his hand and foot down with a force that made the building ring,—“and I must and will be heard!” The congregation started, and the old man woke. “Ay, ay,” said Whitefield, fixing his eyes on him, “I have waked you

\* His panacea for his ailments was perpetual preaching; and just before he died, he said: “A good pulpit sweat would give me relief.”

“Given,” says Sir James Stephen, “a preacher who, during the passage of the sun through the ecliptic, addresses his audience every seventh day in two discourses of the dwarfish size to which sermons attain in this degenerate age, and multiply his efforts by forty, and you do not reach the measure of Whitefield's homiletical labors, during each of his next five and thirty years. Combine this with the fervor with which he habitually spoke, the want of all aids to the voice in the fields and the thoroughfares he frequented, and the toil of rendering himself distinctly audible to thousands and tens of thousands, and, considered merely as a physical phenomenon, the result is amongst the most curious of well-authenticated marvels.”

up, have I? I meant to do it. I am not come here to preach to stocks and stones: I have come to you in the name of the Lord God of Hosts, and I must, and I will, have an audience." There was no more sleeping or indolence that day.

A pulpit orator of a far different stamp from the great Methodist who sleeps at Newburyport, was the celebrated Baptist preacher, the friend of Sir James Mackintosh and John Foster, ROBERT HALL. Delicate and feeble in infancy, and slow of perception,—unable, when two years old, to walk or speak,—he gave no promise of the physical and intellectual athlete which he afterward became. Learning the alphabet from his nurse on the village grave-stones, he became a talker almost as soon as he could speak, and possessing himself of the signs of thought, he became at once a quick and earnest thinker. The stories told of his precocity almost stagger belief. While but six years of age, he would steal away after school-hours to the grave-yard, with his pinafore stuffed with books (including an English dictionary, to help him understand the hard words), and then, spreading out his volumes on the long grass, continue at his studies with grave and moody face till the curfew sounded the knell of day. Before he was nine he read and re-read, we are told, "with intense interest," Jonathan Edwards's works on "The Affections" and "The Will"; at ten, he had become a prolific writer, elaborating, systematizing, and pouring forth his knowledge in the form of essays and sermons, which, mounted on a parlor chair, he preached with eloquence, solemnity and pathos to his brothers and sisters; and at eleven, his school-teacher confessed, with an ingenuous honesty which has few prece-

dents, his utter inability to keep pace with his pupil, and begged that he might be removed from the school. Soon after this a friend of his father's was so struck with the boy's gift of speech, that he prevailed on him on several occasions to deliver a kind of sermon to a select company, assembled for the purpose, at his house,—“an egregious impropriety” which Mr. Hall in manhood could never recall without grief. In thinking of such mistakes of good men, he was wont to say with Baxter: “Nor should men turn preachers as the river Nilus breeds frogs (saith Herodotus), when one half *moveth* before the other half is *made*, and which yet is but *plain mud*.”

It was the hearing of a sermon while attending an academy at Northampton which first kindled in young Hall's breast the flame of oratory. It is remarkable that, though burning and panting for oratorical renown, his first efforts, like those of Sheridan and Curran, were ignominious failures. Attempting an address at Broadmead chapel, he “stuck” almost at the beginning. Speaking for a few minutes with facility, he suddenly stopped, covered his face with his hands, and sobbing aloud, “O, I have lost all my ideas!” burst into a flood of tears. Even in this failure, however, the audience had the penetration to discover a species of triumph, declaring, as they went away,—“If that young man once acquire self-possession, he will be the most eminent speaker of his day.” A second trial a week after, in the same place, ended in a more agonizing failure. This time he did not give way to sobs and tears; but, springing from the desk in a kind of impatient rage, he hurried to the vestry. In vain did the deacons and other friends strive to calm his excited feelings; dashing out of the room, he hurried precipitately

home, and, entering his room, startled two of his companions, who were waiting his arrival, by exclaiming, as he struck the table with his clinched hand, "Well, if this does not humble me, the devil *must* have me!" A third trial was made, and from that hour, though he shook like an aspen-leaf at the proposal, he began to take rank as the most brilliant pulpit orator of England.

Spending four years in hard study at King's College, Aberdeen, he came away with a mind richly furnished, powerful, and intensely active, and began pouring forth its treasures of thought and feeling at Broadmead, Bristol. Though but twenty-one years old at this time, he drew crowds, including the most eminent men in the city, to hear him. Going next to Cambridge, he succeeded to Dr. Robinson, the leader of the Evangelical Nonconformists, and during fourteen years preached to crowded houses with ever-increasing brilliancy and power. The magnetism of his genius penetrated beyond the narrow and conventional boundaries of sects; and senators, clergymen of the Established Church, and University men, from undergraduates to heads of colleges, gladly hung upon his lips. At this time the excesses of the French Revolution were producing the intensest excitement in England, and Mr. Hall was speedily engulfed in the whirlpool. The result was first a powerful pamphlet "On the Freedom of the Press," and next an eloquent and magnificent sermon,—perhaps his masterpiece,—on "Modern Infidelity." With this powerful discourse the fame of Robert Hall attained its zenith. Dr. Parr, Sir James Mackintosh, statesmen of all parties, intellectual men of every rank and profession, now hastened to do homage to his genius. Undergraduates, tutors, and fellows of the University flocked in such

numbers to hear him, that the heads of colleges became alarmed, and discussed the expediency of preventing it by an order; but Dr. Mansel, afterward Bishop, then Master of Trinity, the largest college, declared he could not be party to such a measure, and thanked Mr. Hall not only for his sermon, but for his powerful efforts in behalf of the Christian cause. The general thanksgiving which followed the Peace of Amiens, brought forth his splendid discourse on "War"; and when, a few months thereafter, Napoleon suddenly broke the peace, Hall delivered his still more masterly discourse on "The Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis." It was in this ringing sermon, which has all the fiery energy of a war-lyric, that he grandly declared England to be, in respect to the war waging between liberty and despotism, the very "Thermopylæ of the universe."

A still abler effort than this last was his discourse on the death of the Princess Charlotte, delivered at Leicester, the scene of his next pastorate. A nation was weeping over the extinction of its hopes, and genius poured out its strains of grief and admiration in a thousand pulpits; but not one of the other discourses, eloquent as many of them were, could for a moment compare in majesty of thought and diction with the tribute which this dissenter and radical thinker,—this reformer and friend of the people,—laid at the feet of a Christian princess. "In reading it," says a writer, "one marvels at the imperial grandeur of the execution, as the mighty preacher groups together and manages with a master-hand, and with the apparent ease of a child at play, the various momentous considerations which the event was fitted to awaken in a mind capable of a comprehensive survey."

To analyze the eloquence of Robert Hall, and point out the sources of its power, is not an easy task. His published sermons, most of which are from the scanty notes of his hearers, give, according to all the accounts of him, but a faint idea of his imperial genius. In the redistillation the aroma has fled. The effect is like that of "champagne in decanters, or Herodotus in Beloe's version." A late skeptical writer pronounces him "the sublimest and purest genius among modern divines."\* For forty years he had no rival in the English pulpit. During this long time men of all sects and parties, men of the highest intellect and culture, the leaders of the Church, the Bar, and the Senate, sat with rapt attention under the spell of his speech. What was the secret of this attraction? Was it in his personal magnetism,—the majesty of his mien, his gestures, or the musical intonations of his voice? Or was it in his rhetorical skill, the exquisite arrangement and rhythmical flow of his periods, and the dazzling imagery in which his affluent imagination clothed his ideas? In many of these oratorical gifts he was wanting. He had a large-built, robust figure, and a countenance "formed, as if on purpose, for the most declared manifestation of power"; but all his life he was a sufferer from acute physical pains, necessitating the use of large doses of stimulants and narcotics; his voice was weak, his action heavy and ungraceful, and in all the tricks of the rhetorician, the pomp and circumstance of oratory, he was lacking altogether. His style, while it has great vigor and impressiveness, is too highly Latinized to be popular; it abounds in technical phrases and abstract forms of expression, and, except in certain highly-wrought passages,

\* W. R. Greg, author of "The Creed of Christendom."

is quite devoid of pictorial embellishment. It was, apparently, in no one predominant quality that his power lay, but in the harmony and momentum in action of all his faculties,—faculties which, whether of mind or heart, have rarely been so admirably adjusted and finely proportioned in any other human being.

In natural endowment and variety of acquisition, in power of metaphysical analysis and in force and sweep of imagination, in finished scholarship and in philosophical culture, he was equally distinguished; and over all his powers of mind, natural and acquired, he had an absolute mastery, rendering them obedient at a nod. His eloquence was not the product of art, but the spontaneous outgushing of a mind full to bursting of intellectual riches, and of a heart burning with zeal for truth, and love for God and man. When he was thoroughly roused, his oratory was like an impetuous mountain torrent in a still night. He took his place among the kings of oratory, not because he sought for it, but because it was his by divine gift. A systematic reader, he was also a profound and untrammelled thinker, and was eloquent because he was tethered by no theological chain, and spoke out courageously what was in him, even at the risk of startling orthodox nerves.

His manner in the pulpit was as original as the man. The introductory services were usually performed by an assistant, during which, we are told, the preacher, with his eyes closed, his features as still as death, and his head sinking down almost on his chest, presented an image of entire abstraction. For a moment, perhaps, he would seem to wake to a perception of the scene before him, but would instantly relapse into the same state. When he began a discourse, there was usually little expression in his coun-

tenance; and sometimes, when he was not much excited by his themes, or was suffering from physical pain, there was little expression during the entire delivery. At other times his face would kindle as he went on, and toward the close would "light up almost into a glare." He would announce his text in the most unpretending manner imaginable, and, though athletic in frame, would speak for some minutes in a tone so low as to be barely audible. During even the first twenty minutes there would be nothing in his discourse indicating to his hearers that a giant stood before them; all the time, perhaps, he would be pulling the leaves of his Bible, "as if he were a bookbinder, engaged in taking a book to pieces, while his eyes would be steadfastly fixed in one direction, as if his whole audience were gathered into one corner of the room." Presently the scene would change; his voice would swell from an almost unintelligible whisper to a trumpet peal; and when he was concluding, the effect upon the nervous system of the listener was like the shock of artillery.

One of the most obvious and noteworthy of Mr. Hall's characteristics as a preacher, was the total oblivion of self,—his utter abandonment and absorption in his subject. "There was not the semblance of parade," says an American clergyman\* who once heard him at Broadmead Chapel,—"nothing that betrayed the least thought of being eloquent; but there was a power of thought, a grace and beauty, and yet force of expression, a facility of commanding the best language, without apparently thinking of the language at all, combined with a countenance all glowing from the fire within, which constituted a fascina-

\* "Visits to European Celebrities," by W. B. Sprague, D.D.



tion that was to me perfectly irresistible." John Foster, who often heard Mr. Hall, notes one, and only one, peculiarity of action in his friend's preaching. Under the excitement of his theme, when it rose to the highest pitch, he unconsciously acquired a corresponding elation of attitude and expression; would turn, though not with frequent change, toward the different parts of the assembly; and would, for a moment, make one step back from his position at the last word of a climax, or at the sentence which decisively clinched an argument,—an action which inevitably suggested the idea of the recoil of heavy ordnance.

Original as Mr. Hall was, in thought and manner, he twice in his youth aped the manner of another. When he was twenty-three years old he heard Dr. Robinson, of Cambridge, and was so captivated that he thought he would copy his style, matter, and manner. Like other imitators, he made an utter failure. When, some years afterward, a friend alluded to this, Mr. Hall said: "Why, sir, I was too proud to remain an imitator. After my second trial, as I was walking home, I heard one of the congregation say to another, 'Really, Mr. Hall did remind us of Mr. Robinson.' That was a knock-down blow to my vanity, and I at once resolved that, if ever I *did* acquire reputation, it should belong to my own character, and not be that of a *likeness*. Besides, sir, if I had not been a foolish young man, I should have seen how ridiculous it was to imitate such a preacher as Mr. Robinson. He had a musical voice, and was master of its intonations; he had wonderful self-possession, and could say *what* he pleased, *when* he pleased, and *how* he pleased; while my voice and manner were naturally bad; and far

from having self-command, I never entered the pulpit without omitting to say something I wished to say, and saying something that I wished unsaid; and besides all this, I ought to have known that for me *to speak slow was ruin*. You know, sir, that force or momentum is conjointly as the body and velocity; therefore, as my voice is feeble, what is wanted in body must be made up in velocity, or there will not be, cannot be, any impression." At another time he tried the elephantine manner of Dr. Johnson: "Yes, sir, I aped Johnson and I preached Johnson, and, I am afraid, with little more of evangelical sentiment than is to be found in his essays; but it was youthful folly, and it was very great folly. I might as well have attempted to dance a hornpipe in the cumbersome costume of Gog and Magog. My puny thoughts could not sustain the load of words in which I tried to clothe them." But though he abandoned Johnson as a model, there is considerable resemblance between the structure of his sentences and those of the author of the "Rambler." He employs simpler words and shorter sentences, but avails himself of "all the arts of the balance, from the ponderous swing to the sharp emphatic point."

It is an interesting fact that Mr. Hall, who so habitually "spoke as he was moved," and not for effect, was, at one time,—probably at an early period of his life,—tormented by a desire of preaching better than he could; and yet he says that to his ear it would have been anything but commendation, had any one said to him: "You have given us a pretty sermon." "If I were upon trial for my life," he adds, "and my advocate should amuse the jury with his tropes and figures, burying his argument beneath a profusion of flowers of rhetoric, I would

say to him: 'Tut, man, you care more for your vanity than for my hanging. Put yourself in my place, *speaking in view of the gallows*, and you will tell your story plainly and earnestly.' I have no objections to a lady's winding a sword with ribbons, and studding it with roses, when she presents it to her lover; but in the day of battle he will tear away the ornaments, and present the naked edge to the enemy."

A striking contrast to the style of Robert Hall was that of the great pulpit orator of Scotland, DR. CHALMERS. It would be hard to name an orator of equal fame who had so few of the usual external helps and ornaments of eloquence; and hence the first feeling of almost every hearer whom his fame had attracted, was a shock of disappointment. As he rose to speak, and the hearer contrasted with his ideal of an orator, or with his preconceived notions, the middle-sized, and somewhat strange and uncouth figure before him, with its broad but not lofty forehead, its prominent cheek bones, and its drooping, lack-lustre eyes; as he observed the abrupt and awkward manner, apparently indicating embarrassment or irreverence, or both, and listened to the harsh croaking tones, the broad Fifeshire tongue,\* while the speaker bent over his manuscript, and following it with his finger, read every word like a schoolboy,—it seemed incredible that this could be the man who had stormed the hearts of his countrymen for more than thirty years, and whose published discourses had rivalled in their sale the productions of the great Wizard of the North. All this, however, was but the

\* He pronounced "parish" as if it were written "*paarish*," and the words "issue of which" as if they spelt "*issy of whuch*."

gathering of the clouds as a prelude to dazzling and flashing outbursts of lightning, and to the reverberating thunder-peals in the heavens. Gradually the great preacher would unveil himself; the ungainly attitude, the constraint and awkwardness, the vacant look, and feebleness of voice and manner, would be cast aside, or if in some degree retained, would be overlooked by the hearer in the deepening interest of the theme; the voice, though still harsh and unmusical, would ring out and thrill like a clarion; the eye, which was so dull and half-closed, would be lighted up with intelligence; the breast would heave, and the body sway to and fro, with the tumult of the thought; voice and face would seem bursting with the fury of excitement, while his person was bathed with perspiration; the words, before so slow, would leap forth with the rapidity and force of a mountain-torrent; argument would follow argument, illustration would follow illustration, and appeal would follow appeal, in quick succession, till at last all hearts were subdued, and carried captive by the flood of an overwhelming and resistless eloquence.

If we may believe Mr. Lockhart, the world never possessed an orator whose minutest peculiarities of gesture and voice had more power in increasing the effect of what he said,—whose delivery was the first, the second, and the third excellence of his oratory, more truly than was that of Dr. Chalmers. Hazlitt depicts him as looking like a man in mortal throes and agonies with doubts and difficulties, and asserts that the description of Balfour of Burley in his cave, with his Bible in one hand and his sword in the other, contending with the imaginary enemy of mankind, gasping for breath, and with the cold moisture running down his face, gives no inadequate idea of Chal-

mers's prophetic fury in the pulpit. Another writer was so struck with his prodigious energy, his native feral force, that he declares that, had it not been intellectualized and sanctified, it would have "made him, who was the greatest of orators, the strongest of ruffians, a mighty murderer upon the earth."

One of the most striking features in Chalmers's oratory was his iteration. Few speakers have surpassed him in the ability to compose variations on a given theme, and it was to this that he owed much of his success in charming the popular ear. Robert Hall declared that even Burke had less of this peculiarity; an idea thrown into the mind of the great Scotch preacher, he said, "is just as if thrown into a kaleidoscope. Every turn presents the object in a new and beautiful form; but the object presented is just the same. His mind seems to move on hinges, not on wheels. There is incessant motion, but no progress." One idea!—yes, but what an idea it is! "One, but a lion!" said the lioness in the fable, when another animal, that boasted of its numerous but insignificant offspring, reproached her with her want of fecundity. "The one idea of Chalmers," says the eloquent Bethune, "is worth a month's preaching from the critics who cavil at him." It must be admitted in the great Scotchman's favor, that what was only a rigid unity in his discourses was often confounded with an absolute sameness of ideas. The cast of his mind was mathematical; and hence, instead of accumulating arguments in support of a proposition, and maintaining it by their united weight, he was wont to bring forward a single decisive reason, grouping about it all his facts and illustrations, and drawing it out link by link with untiring continuity and never

wearying iteration. Beginning with a statement of his thought as a whole, he proceeded to develop it more particularly and slowly in the subsequent parts of his discourse; and because he thus adhered tenaciously to the one point he had in view, some critics hastily concluded that he had all the while been only amplifying some small thought with which he had started. But if he hurled but one idea at the audience, it was hurled with a giant's force, and was no pigmy thought, but "reminded one of the missiles thrown by the holy angels in their fight with Satan's legions, when they

'Main promontories flung, which in the air  
Came shadowing, and oppressed whole legions arm'd.'"

The overwhelming effect of Chalmers's oratory is the more remarkable when we consider that he preached from manuscript only, and, except for a brief season, did not extemporize. At an early period in his career, Andrew Fuller, the Baptist preacher and theologian, heard him preach, and declared: "If that man would but throw away his papers in the pulpit, he might be King of Scotland." He threw away his papers, and again and again tried to extemporize; but every attempt ended in failure. It was not that he lacked nerve, memory, intellectual energy, or abundance of thought; on the contrary, he suffered from an overmastering fluency of mind, from mental plethora. He used to say of himself that he was like Rousseau, "*slow but ardent*," and compared himself to a bottle full of liquid; when suddenly turned up, it cannot flow at first, from its very fullness, and only bursts and splutters. He therefore wisely abandoned all further attempts to extemporize, and ever afterward read his sermons,—a procedure which would seem fatal to the electric effects they

produced, did we not know from the examples of Newman Hall, George Thompson, Lord Brougham, and many other eloquent speakers, that a man may hold an audience *with* a manuscript as truly, if not as long and as spell-bound, as without one. In this matter no Procrustean rule can be made for all speakers; that is the best cat which catches the most mice, and that is the best way of preaching, in a particular case, which enables one to win the most souls. The secret of Chalmers's success under the disadvantages we have named, was the intensity and impetuosity of his temperament,—the warm human feeling which possessed him,—leading him to compose, not only his sermons, but his other writings not intended for oral delivery, with the constant sense of an assemblage of people before him.

The moment he took up his pen in the study, he throbbed and glowed and mentally thundered as if standing up before the listening multitude. He had always, we are told, this stimulus of the great orator, even in the privacy of the closet, and in the silence and solitariness of midnight study. "He wrote everything to be spoken; he wrote everything as if he were speaking it, at least in feeling, if not in actual sounds; he wrote everything with an audience glaring in his face. Hence his sermons have all the advantage, all the *verve* and palpitation, of direct extempore address. They have none of the chilliness of discourses written before, nor the lukewarmness of discourses served up after the delivery. From the peculiarity of which we have spoken, they have all the pith of preparation, and all the quick leap of impromptu." Not only did he write with this inspiration of the speaker, as if thousands were hanging upon his words, but he wrote with great rapidity, rarely pausing

to choose his words, though spending much time upon the thought; and hence his discourses have "all the bounding liveliness of improvisation."

The manuscript, from which he poured forth his ideas with a force and fervor rarely equaled by an impromptu speaker, was never thought of by those who were thrilled by his oratory. An old woman is reported to have said of him, "Ah, it's fell reading, *yon!*" "I know not what it is," said the fastidious Jeffrey, after hearing him in 1816, "but there is something altogether remarkable about that man! It reminds me more of what one reads of as the effect of the eloquence of Demosthenes than anything I ever heard." The brilliant Canning, who went with Wilberforce, Huskisson, and Lord Binning to hear Chalmers, in London, in 1817, was melted to tears. Though disappointed at first, he said, as he left the church, "The *tartan* beats us all!" We are told that Professor Young, of Glasgow, scarcely ever heard Chalmers without weeping like a child; and upon one occasion, Dr. Hanna tells us, he was so electrified that he leaped up from his seat on the bench, and stood breathless and motionless, gazing at the preacher till the burst was over, the tears all the while rolling down his cheeks; and on another occasion, forgetful of time and place,—fancying himself, perhaps, in the theatre,—he rose and loudly clapped his hands in the ecstasy of his delight.

But the most striking illustration of the great preacher's power is furnished by an incident which occurred in Rowland Hill's Chapel, London, as the great Scotchman was preaching there a little after his fame had traveled beyond the precincts of Scotland. His audience was numerous and principally of the higher circles. Upwards of



one hundred clergymen were present, to whom the front seats in the gallery were appropriated. In the midst of these sat Hill, in a state of great anxiety, arising from his hopes, and fearful lest Chalmers should not succeed before an audience so refined and critical. The doctor as usual began in his low, monotonous tone, and his broad provincial dialect was visibly disagreeable to the delicate ears of his metropolitan audience. Poor Hill was now upon the rack; but the man of God, having thrown his chain around the audience, took an unguarded moment to touch it with the electric fluid of his oratory, and in a moment every heart began to throb and every eye to fill. Knowing well how to take advantage of this bold stroke, he continued to ascend; and so majestic and rapid was his flight, that in a few minutes he attained an eminence so high that every imagination was enraptured. The rapid change from depression to elation which Hill experienced, was too much for him to bear. He felt so bewildered and intoxicated with joy, that unconsciously he started from his seat, and before his brethren could interfere, he struck the front of the gallery with his clinched fist, and roared out with a stentorian voice,—“*Well done, Chalmers!*”

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A PLEA FOR ORATORICAL CULTURE.

IN the preceding chapters of this work we have attempted to point out and illustrate the aim, power, and influence of the public speaker. To give to the noblest thoughts the noblest expression; to penetrate the souls of men, and make them feel as if they were new creatures, conscious of new powers and loftier purposes; to make truth and justice, wisdom and virtue, patriotism and religion, holier and more majestic things than men had ever dreamed them to be before; to delight as well as to convince; to charm, to win, to arouse, to calm, to warn, to enlighten, and to persuade,—this is the function of the orator. In concluding this work, let us ask whether in view of the prodigious influence of his art, its cultivation should be neglected, as it comparatively is, both by individuals and in our schools and colleges? We say “prodigious” influence, for, after every allowance has been made for the supposed diminution of that influence in modern times, we still believe that there is no other accomplishment for which there is so constant a demand in the church, in the senate, at the bar, in the lecture-room, at the hustings, and elsewhere, or which raises its possessor to power with equal rapidity. Some of the most fiery themes of eloquence may have passed away with the occasions of tyranny, outrage, and oppression that created

them; but though the age of "Philippics" has happily gone, yet so long as wickedness and misery, injustice and wretchedness, prevail on the earth,—so long as the Millennium is still distant, and Utopia a dream,—the voice of the orator will still be invoked to warn, to denounce, to terrify, and to overwhelm. Hobbes defined a republic to be an aristocracy of orators, interrupted at times by the monarchy of a single orator; and assuredly in a country like ours, where the grandest rewards and the proudest positions are the prizes open to successful eloquence, we may well wonder that so few strive for mastery in the race "where that immortal garland is to be won, not without dust and heat." How shall we account for this neglect? Is there any adequate reason why the art of persuasive speaking should be less thoroughly studied and understood, or less effectually practiced now, than at any former period in our country's history? Is there any necessity that the fearful faults in attitude, tone, and gesture, exhibited in the oratory of the pulpit, the bar, and the platform, at the present day, should be perpetuated? Is it pardonable that in professions whose most effective and conspicuous function employs the voice as its instrument, there should be so little recognition of the importance of improving that instrument, and of rendering it as capable as possible of producing its legitimate effects? Is it necessary that the majority of pulpit speakers should read the hymns, as they do, without feeling, grace, or appreciation, as the clerk of a legislative assembly might properly read a bill, or as a lawyer's clerk might read an inventory of a bankrupt's assets? Is it desirable that when they deliver their sermons, they should cling to the velvet cushion with both hands, keep their eyes glued to the written page,

and speak of the ecstasies of joy and fear with a voice and face which indicate neither? Is it desirable that "every semi-delirious sectary who pours forth his animated nonsense with the genuine voice and look of passion, should gesticulate away the congregation of the most profound and learned divine" who has had a liberal education, "and in two Sundays preach him bare to the very sexton"? Why "call in the aid of paralysis to piety? Is sin to be taken from men, as Eve was from Adam, by casting them into a deep slumber"?

That the cultivation of oratory is thus neglected at the present day, needs, we think, no proof. More than forty years ago a writer in the "North American Review" bewailed this neglect in the following words: "Anything," says he, "like settled, concentrated, patient effort for improvement in oratory; anything like an effort running through the whole course of education, renewed with every day as the great object, and pursued into the discharge of professional duties, is scarcely known among us. The mass of our public speakers would as soon think of taking up some mechanical trade or subsidiary occupation of life as they would think of adopting Cicero's practice of daily declamations. We do not believe that, on an average, our clergymen have spent ten weeks of preparation on this most important part of their professional duties." To-day, this neglect is even more marked. Not a year passes but we see hundreds of young men turned out of our colleges whose failure in public life is assured in advance, because they have acquired, and probably will acquire, no mastery of the arts of expression. Men with a tithe of their knowledge and a tithe of their culture outstrip them in the race of life, because, though they know

less, they have been unwearied in their efforts to acquire the art of communicating what they know in a pleasing and attractive way. In many of our colleges not only is no provision made for the study of elocution, but the study is discouraged by the absorbing attention demanded by other studies. Skill in oratory is identified with intellectual shallowness; and it seems to be feared that if a young man once begins earnestly to cultivate his voice, he is in danger of becoming *vox et preterea nihil*. A leading New York journal stated a year or two ago, that it knew of a college, the speaking of whose students at one of its commencements ought to have been felt by its officers as a burning disgrace, whose trustees, nevertheless, rejected the application of a teacher of reputation and experience to be permitted to give *gratuitous* instruction in that branch of education,—for what reason, do you think, candid reader? Not because they questioned the competency of the teacher, but because they “*didn't believe in teaching elocution at all!*” Even in those colleges where lessons in elocution are given, the instruction, in many instances, does not exceed, during the whole four years' course, six weeks of teaching,—a treatment of the art which, in view of its difficulty and value, is only a sham and a mockery.

In nearly all our theological seminaries the art of oratory is treated with similar neglect, not to say contempt. In the theological equipment of their pupils, no pains are spared. The newly-fledged graduate is well versed in church history, and knows all the shades of religious belief, ancient and modern. He can tell you who Novatus was, and who Novatian. He can tell you to a nicety the difference between Homoousians and Homoiusians, Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians, Monophysites and

Monothelites, Jansenists and Molinists. He has explored all the transactions of the Councils of Nice, Chalcedon, Trent, and Dort; he can give you a minute history of all the controversies that have vexed the peace of the church, recite the sixteen articles of the Priscillian creed, and tell you whether *filioque* is properly in the creed of the Latin church, and what was the precise heresy of Eutyches. He can read Hebrew with tolerable facility, and can split hairs in metaphysical theology, if not with Hermaic subtilty, at least with skill enough to puzzle and baffle an ordinary caviller. But while he has crammed his head with knowledge, he has never once learned how to make an effectual use of his knowledge. While he has packed his brain with history and Hebrew and exegesis, he is either uneducated in the all-important art of communicating the results of his erudition in a fascinating, or, at least, unforbidding way, or he has been instructed to despise that art. He has acted like a man who spends years in gathering materials for the erection of a mighty edifice, yet never attempts to arrange them in an order which will secure beauty, strength, or convenience. There is no doubt that many a sermon which has been written with burning tears in the study, has been struck, as if by magic, with the coldness of death in the pulpit. The preacher who was all alive a few hours before is transformed into a marble statue.

What is the cause of this neglect of elocution,— whether it is because, as has been charged, these seminaries “freeze the genial current of the soul,” and generate a kind of fine, high-bred sanctified disdain of heartiness and enthusiasm, leading one to care more for what Quintilian calls an “accurate exility” than for force and fervor of

style,—we do not pretend to decide. We are inclined, however, to believe that the secret of this neglect lies partly in an unwillingness to believe that oratory is an art, and that excellence in this, as in every other art, can be attained only by careful training, persistent painstaking, and the study of the best models, and partly in the illusion that because religion is the most important of human concerns, it needs for the enforcement of its claims few or no adventitious helps. Pious and worthy divines, as one of their number long ago declared, are too apt to imagine that men are what they ought to be; to suppose that the novelty and ornament, the charm of style and of elocution, which are necessary to enforce every temporal doctrine, are wholly superfluous in religious admonition. They are apt to think that the world at large consider religion as the most important of all concerns, merely because it is so; whereas the actual facts show that the very reverse is the case. “If a clergyman,” says Sydney Smith, “were to read the gazette of a naval victory from the pulpit, he would be dazzled with the eager eyes of his audience,—they would sit through an earthquake to hear him. On the other hand, the cry of a child, the fall of a book, the most trifling occurrence, is sufficient to dissipate religious thought, and to introduce a more willing train of ideas; a sparrow fluttering about a church is an antagonist which the most profound theologian in Europe is wholly unable to overcome.”

Since, then, men are comparatively indifferent to the reception of religious truth,—since they are prone, too, to cavil when they have the shadow of an excuse,—what can be more important than that every obstacle to the preacher's success should be removed, and that the dis-

courses which they are invited to hear should be adapted to win and keep their attention? When will our theological teachers learn, and act upon the conviction, that preaching is not philosophizing, not setting forth dogmas with orthodox preciseness, nor exhibiting the results of profound learning in Greek or Hebrew particles or idioms,—needful as these may all be,—but the earnest, anxious, successful manifestation of truth by the living voice, the eye, and the gesture, all shedding forth their mysterious magnetism, and compelling sympathy and conviction by a profound and manifest sympathy with human miseries and needs? It is the fashion with some preachers who pride themselves on what they call their “solid sermons,” but whose spiritual artillery, however, is more remarkable for bore than for calibre, to sneer at popular preachers, who have more eloquence than theological learning or metaphysical acumen; but it is certain that no man ever won the public ear without some genuine attraction; and it would be far better to search out and emulate this attractiveness than to despise it.

The main cause, however, of the neglect of attention to oratory, is the heresy,—which is as pestilent as any theological heresy,—that eloquence is a gift of Nature purely, and must be left to her direction. It is foolish, we are told, to think of making an orator. A speaker may be taught to articulate his words distinctly, and to gesticulate, if not gracefully, at least with propriety; he may be taught to master his subject thoroughly, and to accommodate his style of speaking to his audience; and by continual practice he may overcome his natural timidity as well as his awkwardness, and acquire a habitual ease and self-possession. But when you have done all,



you have not made an orator. Unless he have the God-given inspiration, the inborn genius, which predestines him to public speaking, he is as far from eloquence as any scholar in Raphael's studio, who has faithfully learned to draw, to mix his colors, and to lay them on the canvas, is from being a Raphael. In all this there is a large amount of truth, and (especially in the inference drawn from it) an equal amount of error. Of course, nobody supposes that a man can become an orator without a spark of oratorical genius. Mere scholasticism, which derives its brilliancy from the midnight oil, we readily admit, can never compete with the inspiration which springs, armed and ready, from a sudden occasion, like Pallas from the head of Jove. In all lofty eloquence there must be a great and earnest soul behind a great cause, appealing, with plausible, if not with profound and weighty reasons, to a sympathetic audience for immediate action. Without these essential prerequisites, the incidents of modulation, gesture, rhythm, accent, pronunciation, and all the other adjuncts of declamation, are but sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. But though nature and circumstance may do much toward the production of eloquence, they cannot do all. If they can furnish the world with ready-made orators, why are not the orators forthcoming? How happens it that all the successful speakers, and just in the degree that they were successful, have been conspicuous for their intense study of their art?

If inspiration and spontaneity can achieve such miracles here, why not in the arts of music, sculpture, and painting? Why not trust to inspiration in architecture, also, and in landscape gardening? There are born gymnasts, too, we suppose, and born marksmen, chess-players,

pedestrians, and boatmen. Do all these persons trust to the inborn faculty, to spontaneous impulse, without apprenticeship or training? Are the careful diet, the early hours, the daily testing of vigor and skill, the total abstinence from hurtful drinks and food, the training of the eye, the ear, the hand, or whatever of these or other means are employed, to acquire skill and ensure success,—are all these spontaneous actions? Does the man who pulls the stroke oar, or the man who disarms his opponent at fence, do it by spontaneity? Admit to the fullest extent, that eloquence in its fundamental qualities, its groundwork, is a natural gift, yet it by no means follows that the speaker can dispense with art and study. Though the great orator must, in a certain sense, be born such,—though men are *organized* to speak well, as truly as birds are organized to sing, dogs to bark, and beavers to build,—though to be eminently successful in oratory, one must have a special constitution of mind and body, by which he is called incessantly and almost irresistibly, by a mysterious and inexplicable attraction that sways his whole being, to reproduce his mental life in this way,—yet he must *learn* his craft as slowly and as laboriously as the painter, the sculptor, or the musician. “To conform to nature, or rather to know when to conform,” it has been truly said, “we should previously know what nature is,—what it prescribes, and what it includes.”

The truth is, those persons who talk so much about “born orators,” and what they call “a natural and artless eloquence,” are guilty of a transparent fallacy. Nature and art, so far from antagonizing each other, are often the self-same thing. True art,—art in the sense of an instrument of culture,—is drawn directly from all that

can be learned of the perfect in man's nature, and is designed not to repress or extinguish, but to develop, train, and extend what he already possesses. Nearly every person who has what is called the "gift" of oratory, finds that he has great defects associated with his native gift. He has a harsh or feeble voice, an indistinct articulation, a personal, provincial, or national twang, an awkward manner, a depraved taste; and instead of developing the divine faculty, he has been laboring to thwart and obstruct it. What is more *natural* than that he should endeavor to overcome these defects, or, if he cannot get rid of them altogether, at least to diminish them by vocal exercises, by studying the best models, and by listening to the advice of a judicious friend? But what is all this but a resort to *art*, or the deliberate application of means to an end?—yet, is it art that is in the slightest degree inconsistent with nature? If so, then every civilized, every thoughtful and moral man, who represses his natural impulses to be indolent, improvident, rude, and selfish, is so far unnatural. It is evident, therefore, that in admitting to the fullest extent the necessity of a natural manner in speaking, we do not exclude culture. When we say of a gentleman that he has a natural manner in society, we do not mean that he demeans himself like a savage or an unlettered boor, but the very reverse. We mean that he has mingled in the best society, and caught its ease, quietness, grace, and self-possession, till he reproduces them instinctively, without a thought of his manner, in his own deportment and bearing. When landscape gardeners talk of a natural style, they do not mean woods full of underbrush and marshes, lands bristling with sharp rocks, briars, and thistles, any more than

they mean grounds laid out in stiff, formal plots, with rectangular walks, exotic plants, and trees trimmed into the shape of peacocks' tails. They mean grounds skillfully diversified, with gentle slopes, land and water, here a bit of native rock and there a clump of native oaks, with just enough of wildness and roughness to set off the beauty of the lawns, and the whole so artistically, but not artificially arranged, as to be a copy of nature in her happiest moods. So a truly "natural" oratory is one in which the speaker's natural powers are so trained as to produce their happiest effect. No effort is made to repress his native genius, nor is he moulded and twisted into any conventional forms. All the culture he receives is based on his natural gifts, and is directed simply to giving them the fullest play and development, and to pruning away every thought or peculiarity which may weaken their force.

But it is said that, somehow or other, *any* system of instruction is apt to do injury, by fettering and constraining the intellect, and substituting a stiff, mechanical movement for the ease, flexibility, and freedom of nature. If this objection be just, we see not why it is not equally valid against instruction in vocal and instrumental music. The drill of the true teacher will never reappear in the performance of the accomplished speaker, any more than the food he eats will show itself unchanged in his *physique*, but will be merged in the personality of the pupil. If the result of oratorical training has been to make a speaker stiff, unnatural, and mechanical, it is either because he has had a poor teacher, or has but half learned his lesson. The fault lies not in the art, but in the imperfect acquisition of it. As Pascal says to those who complain

of the grief that is intermixed with the consolations of the Christian's life, especially at its beginning, that it is not the effect of the piety which has begun in him, but of the impiety which still remains, so we may say of the bad habits which survive the best courses of instruction. To charge these habits upon the very systems which expose and denounce them, is the height of paradox. The truth is, the tendency in young minds to some of the various forms of spurious and artificial eloquence is so deep-rooted that it resists the utmost efforts to counteract it; and he who ascribes this false oratory to the instruction which has been employed with but partial success to banish it, might with as much propriety say of some spot of land which had been but partially cultivated, and from which the weeds, so prodigally sown by nature, had been imperfectly pulled up, "See, this comes of gardening and artificial culture!" Who can doubt that if the rules of any other art were learned as partially, and as feebly followed, the result would be equally unsatisfactory?

We admit that an over-minute system of technical rules, — especially, if one is enslaved to them, — may, and almost necessarily will, have the effect which has been complained of. The great fault of such systems is that they attempt to establish mathematical rules for utterance, when they are as much out of place here as they would be in a treatise on dancing. It has been justly said that the shades of expression in language are often so delicate and indistinguishable, that intonation will inevitably vary according to the temperament of the speaker, his appreciation of the sense, and the intensity with which he enters into the spirit of what he utters. Some of the best elocutionists have differed with regard to the words on which the stress

should fall in certain passages, and whether certain words should be uttered with the rising or the falling inflection; nor is it easy to decide between them. Some authorities insist that the gesture should precede the utterance of the words, others that it should accompany it. There are many cases for which no rules can provide, and even when the wit and ingenuity of man have done their best in devising a system of merely general principles, passion and emotion, when genuine and overpowering, will often laugh them to scorn. Nevertheless, there must be *some great general principles* of oratory, which should be studied and followed, for to question this would be to question whether men speak best by accident or by design,—when they take no thought, and when they previously consider what they are about to do. It has been contended, however, that any attempt to establish a practical system of elocutionary rules, is useless and absurd. Who, it is asked, would think of telling the pugilist that, in order to give a blow with due effect, he ought to know how the muscles depend for their powers of contraction and relaxation on the nerves, and how the nerves issue from the brain and the spinal marrow, with similar facts, requiring, perhaps, a life-time of study for their comprehension? “When Edmund Kean thrilled the heart of a great audience with the tones of indescribable pathos which he imparted to the words

‘Othello’s occupation is gone,’

it would have puzzled him to tell whether the sentence was ‘a simple declarative’ or an ‘imperfect loose.’ He knew as little of ‘intensive slides,’ ‘bends,’ ‘sweeps,’ and ‘closes,’ as Cribb, the boxer, did of osteology. He studied the intonation which most touched his own heart; and he gave it, reckless of rules, or, rather, guided by that

paramount rule which seeks the highest triumphs of art in elocution in the most genuine utterances of nature."\*

If it be meant by this to intimate that Kean achieved his triumphs without toil, we have only to say that he himself has expressly contradicted the assertion. "People think," said he, "because my style is new and appears natural, that I don't study, and talk about the sudden impulse of genius. *There is no such thing as impulsive acting: all is studied beforehand.*" "Acting," says Talma, in the same spirit, "is a complete paradox. The skillful actor calculates his effects beforehand. He never improvises a burst of passion, or an explosion of grief. The agony which appears instantaneous,—the joy that seems to gush forth involuntarily,—the tone of the voice, the gesture, the look, which pass for sudden inspiration,—have been rehearsed a hundred times. No, believe me, we are *not* nature, but *art*; and in the excellence of our imitation lies the consummation of our skill." But our main reply to all these objections is that they are the stale commonplaces which *all* the enemies of systematic and accurate knowledge, and the eulogists of common sense and practical education, have been repeating since the dawn of science. They have been urged against all systems of logic, of rhetoric, and of grammar, and they might be urged with equal propriety and force against every treatise on music, architecture, agriculture, chess-playing, or any other art whatever. Indeed, Macaulay mocks at books of logic and rhetoric, "filled with idle distinctions and definitions which every man who has learned them makes haste to forget. Who ever reasoned better," he asks, "for having been taught the difference between a syllogism and an enthy-

\* "The Standard Speaker," by Epes Sargent, p. 23.

meme? Who ever composed with greater spirit and elegance because he could define an oxymoron or an aposiopesis?"\* To this we reply that nobody ever pretended that a person who masters a work on logic or rhetoric will reason better *at first* than if he had not studied it; but if any of the principles it unfolds stick in his memory, and he afterward, consciously or unconsciously, shapes and corrects his conclusions, or fashions his style by them, can any one doubt that he reasons or writes better?

Every art, from reasoning down to riding and rowing,—from speaking to fencing and chess-playing,—is learned by ceaseless practice; and can any sane man doubt that its principles will be more quickly and thoroughly mastered, and more faithfully applied in practice, if systematized, than if left to each man to discover for himself? Can any one doubt that a great speaker can give a novice in the art many useful hints which may anticipate and abridge the costly lessons of experience, and save him both time and trouble? Is there any reason why the young speaker should be left to grope out his way by the lead-line only, when he may be provided with a chart and compass? A proper system of oratory or elocution is not a system of artificial rules, but simply *a digest of the methods adopted and practiced by all the great orators who have ever lived*. As to the illustration drawn from the pugilist, who, it is said, does not find it necessary to study anatomy and physiology, and learn in what way the muscles of the arm operate, etc., we reply that the example is not in point. It would be in point if any advocate of elocutionary or oratorical studies had contended that the young speaker should study the anatomy

\* "Trevelyan's Life," Vol. I, p. 360.



of the complicated organs of speech, the formation and action of the muscles of the arm and face, and all the other organs used in expression or gesticulation; but such advice is yet to be given. That Kean "thrilled great audiences," while profoundly ignorant of "slides" and "bends," and all the other technology of elocution, is doubtless true; and so it is equally true that men have electrified and ravished great audiences by their musical genius who knew nothing of counterpoint or thorough base, of "octaves" or "semibreves"; that men have navigated ships across the ocean without a knowledge of astronomy or logarithms; and that men have raised large crops though they have known nothing of the constitution of soils, and have never even looked into a treatise on agricultural chemistry.

It is doubtless true that, in some cases, men without special oratorical training have exhibited a might and majesty, a freedom and grace of eloquence, surpassing those of other men who have devoted years to the study of their art. So a Colburn or a Safford, without mathematical instruction, may solve problems over which trained students of inferior natural gifts may rack their brains in vain. So the Shakspeares, Wattses, Arkwrights, and Franklins, who have never had a college education, can achieve greater results in their callings than the vast majority of college graduates, with all their years of painful study and discipline. When Mozart was asked how he set to work to compose a symphony, he replied: "If once you *think* how you are to do it, you will never write anything worth hearing; I write because I cannot help it." But there has been but one Mozart, and even he must have been at some time a profound student of

his art. Certain it is that no general rules can be drawn from the anomalous success of a few prodigies of genius that are formed to overcome all disadvantages. Even if we allow, what is not true, that the men whom nature has endowed with this heaven-born genius are a rule unto themselves, and can do themselves full justice without instruction, the question still remains, how to improve to the utmost the talents of those who must be public speakers, yet have no pretensions to the inspiration of genius,—men on whom nobody dreams that the mantle of Cicero or Chatham has ever fallen.

We sometimes hear it said that but one rule can be given in oratory, namely, "Be natural." But this advice, though correct enough, is so vague as to be utterly useless. As well might a teacher of the piano tell his pupil "to be natural," and give him no directions as to fingering the keys, expecting that he will thus become a finished player; as well might one hope to rival Paganini on the violin, Stevenson as a machinist, or Blondin in rope-walking, by copying nature, without study,—as one expect, by following this vague and indefinite direction, to play with skill upon that grandest, most musical, and most expressive of all instruments, the human voice, which the Creator has fashioned by the union of an intellectual soul with the powers of speech. As the pianist or violinist must tutor his fingers to pliancy, so as to execute easily and instantaneously all the movements necessary for the quick production of sounds,—as the singer must, by ceaseless, painful drudgery, learn to master all the movements of his throat,—so must the orator, by diligent labor, by vocal exercises multiplied without end, acquire a mastery over those contractions and expansions

of the windpipe, and over all the other organs of speech which modify and inflect the voice in every degree and fraction of its scale. Then, and then only, will his voice be obedient to the least touch of his will; then will musical sounds, that charm men and hold them while they charm, flow spontaneously from his lips, the result, nevertheless, of the subtlest art,—“like the waters of our fountains, which, with great cost and magnificence, are carried from our rivers into our squares, yet appear to flow forth naturally.” But, says one, “can *gesture* be taught or learned? Must I raise my hand at this point, and lower it at that, exactly according to rule? Would you make me a clock-work of mechanism?” As well might you ask: “Must I frame my sentences according to rule, and think of Lindley Murray, whenever I wish to speak?” Of course, all rules, to be good for anything, must be so familiarized as to operate spontaneously. No man knows how to play a piano, who stops to think which keys he must strike. It is only when his fingers glide from one key to another mechanically, automatically, with hardly a thought of anything but the ideas he wishes to express, that one has really mastered the art. The lunge that rids you of your adversary is the inspiration of the moment, never the remembered lesson of the fencing-master. Let the young speaker master thoroughly the rules of his art, and his perceptions will be quick and vigorous as his feelings warm with delivery, and nature will prompt with happy exactness. He will combine the force of apt words, the point of finished periods, the melody of natural tones, and the charm of spontaneous gestures, with an air of fervid sincerity, which will render his oratory as captivating as it will be powerful and impressive.

“But,” says an objector, “is there not a great deal of quackery in the elocutionary profession? Does not the eloquent Dr. Philip Brooks say in his late Yale Seminary lectures, ‘I believe in the true elocution teacher as I believe in the existence of Halley’s comet, which comes into sight of this earth once in about seventy-six years’?” We admit that there is as much sciolism and charlatanry, —as much pedagogism and pedantry,—in the teaching of oratory as in any other department of instruction. But, as in other matters, we do not confound the true with the false,—reject the genuine with the counterfeit,—why should we do so here? If sagacity, good sense, and judgment, are required in choosing an attorney, a physician, or a teacher of other branches than elocution, is it a reproach to sound oratorical instruction that it cannot be had without some care, caution, and trouble in looking for it?

There are some public speakers who, because Nature has been niggard to them of her gifts, can never hope to reach a high standard of excellence. “There are those,” says the eloquent Bethune, “whose attenuated length of limb and angularity of frame, no calisthenist could ever drill into grace; whose voices are too harsh and unpliant, or their musical sense too dull, ever to acquire a pleasing modulation; upon whose arid brain the dews of fancy never fall, the thoughts which grow in it being like certain esculents without bud, blossom, or leaf,—naked, knotty, gnarled, and unseemly. Yet even these, if they cannot be graceful, may become less awkward; if they cannot be musical in utterance, they need not screech or mumble; or, if they have no fancy, they may cease to be grotesque by absurd imitations of it.” Let no one, then, who has occasion to address his fellow-men, forego the study of

oratory, because his gifts are small. While the highest oratorical genius is of rare occurrence,—as rare, as we have already said, as the epic or dramatic,—yet it is positively certain that there is no other faculty whatever, which admits of such indefinite growth and development, or which may be so improved by care and labor, as that of public speaking. When Sir Isaac Newton was asked how he had discovered the true system of the universe, he replied: “By continually thinking upon it.” In like manner, attention to vocal culture,—practice in elocution under intelligent guidance, till the voice has been developed,—the frequent hearing of the best living speakers,—the living in an atmosphere of oratory,—above all, constant recitation in private with careful attention to the meaning and spirit of what one utters,—will develop and perfect an oratorical style in any one who has the gift of eloquence, even in a moderate degree; and for any other a thousand professors can do no more than teach the avoidance of positive faults.

But too many who have the gift are apt, because they do not succeed at once, to be despondent and disheartened. If they were learning to play upon a flute, a violin, or a piano, they would not dream of drawing out all its combinations of harmonious sounds without years of toil; yet they fancy that a far more complex, more difficult, and more expressive instrument, the human voice, may be played upon with a few months' study and practice. Coming to it mere tyros, with the profoundest ignorance of its mechanism, they think to manage all its stops, and command the whole sweep of its vast and varied power; and finding that they cannot at once sound it “from its lowest note to the top of its compass,” they

heave a sigh of despair, and settle down in the conviction that they must be "Orator Mums." Men with real oratorical gifts are, perhaps, most likely to be thus discouraged, because the same judgment and taste which are needed to work up into force or beauty thoughts and feelings imperfectly developed, must, when coupled with the characteristic sensitiveness of genius, induce frequent misgivings as to the degree of success one has achieved. Too many would-be orators are like the dwellers in Oriental lands of whom Sir Joshua Reynolds spoke in his address to the pupils of the Royal Academy. "The travelers in the East," he says, "tell us that when the ignorant inhabitants of those countries are asked concerning the ruins of stately edifices yet remaining among them, the melancholy monuments of their former grandeur and long-lost science, they always answer, 'They were built by magicians.' The untaught mind finds a vast gulf between its own powers and those works of complicated art, which it is utterly unable to fathom; and it supposes that such a void can be passed only by supernatural powers." What this great painter says of his art is true of oratory. As Pycroft has happily observed, in his comment on this passage, "those who know not the *cause* of anything extraordinary and beyond them, may well be astonished at the *effect*; and what the uncivilized ascribe to magic, others ascribe to genius; two mighty pretenders, who for the most part are safe from rivalry only because, by the terror of their name, they discourage in their own peculiar sphere that resolute and sanguine spirit of enterprise which is essential to success. But all magic is science in disguise; let us proceed to take off the mask,—to show that the mightiest objects of

our wonder are mere men like ourselves; have attained their superiority by steps which we can follow; and that we can, at all events, walk in the same path, though there remains at last a space between us."

Lord Chesterfield went so far, in his letters to his son, as to tell him that any man of fair abilities might be an orator. The vulgar, he said, look upon a fine speaker as a supernatural being, and endowed with some peculiar gift of heaven. He himself maintained that a good speaker is as much a mechanic as a good shoemaker, and that the two trades were equally to be learned by the same amount of application. This is an extreme view, and yet if by "orator" we mean not Cicero's magnificent myth, who unites in himself every possible accomplishment, but simply a pleasing and persuasive speaker, his lordship was much nearer the truth than those who are frightened from all attempts to speak by the bugbear of "want of genius." Chesterfield himself was an illustration, to some extent, of his own theory, for he declares that he succeeded in Parliament simply by resolving to succeed. He labored indefatigably to perfect himself not only in public speaking but in conversation, and Horace Walpole says that he was the first speaker of the House. If a schoolboy were required to name the most illustrious example of defects subdued and excellence won by unwearied perseverance, he would name Demosthenes. His discouragements would have appalled an ordinary man. Constitutionally feeble, so that he shrank from the vigorous physical training deemed so essential in a Greek education, he also, as we have seen, stammered in his youth,—the most unlucky infirmity that could befall a would-be orator. He passed two or three months continuously in a

subterranean cell, shaving one side of his head that he might not be able to show himself in public, to the interruption of his rhetorical exercises. At last he overcame his defect, so that he was able to articulate the stubborn guttural most plainly. "Exercitatione fecisse ut *plenisime* diceret." Still, having the most critical and fastidious assembly in the world to speak before, he was hissed from the bema in his early efforts, and retired to his house with covered head and in great distress, yet not disheartened. At one time he was returning to his home in deep dejection, when Satyrus, a great and popular actor, entered into conversation with him. Demosthenes complained that though he was the most painstaking of all orators, and had nearly ruined his health by his intense application, yet he could find no favor with the people, and even drunken seamen and other illiterate persons were preferred to him. "True," replied the actor, "but I will provide you with a remedy, if you will repeat to me some speech in Euripides or Sophocles." Demosthenes complied, and then Satyrus recited the same speech in such a way that it was like a revelation to him. Aided by such hints, and urged on by his own marvellous industry, he by-and-by achieved a distinct success in the law courts, and at last became the most renowned of orators. In all this we see little that is suggestive of a heaven-born genius. No doubt Nature had planted in him the germ of oratory; but it was grown and matured only by the intensest labor and the most ceaseless care,—such labor and such care as would enable any man with fair natural abilities to "sway listening senates" and win verdicts from juries.

The great Roman orator subjected himself to a train-



ing as severe as that of the famous Greek. His life is before us in his works; and from them it appears that he directed all his energies to the cultivation of eloquence, the absorbing passion of his life. Placing himself under the instruction of Molo the Rhodian, he declaimed daily in the presence of some friend, sometimes in his native language, but oftener in Greek, a language with which he was perfectly familiar, and of which he transferred some of the rich luxuriance to his more unadorned and meagre native tongue. He was, apparently, master of logic, ethics, astronomy, and natural philosophy, besides being well versed in geometry, music, grammar, and, in short, every one of the fine arts. It was from no unassisted natural gifts, but from deep learning and the united confluence of the arts and sciences, that, as Tacitus affirms, the resistless torrent of that amazing eloquence derived its strength and rapidity.

If we read the biographies of the great modern orators, we shall find their success to have been owing to similar causes. They have all been deeply impressed with the truth of Cicero's maxim, "magnus dicendi labor, magna res, magna dignitas, summa autem gratia." (*Pro Murena*, 13.) From Chatham downward, not one of them has become an adept in the art of persuading his fellow-men without a careful and persistent adaptation of means to the end. When Robert Walpole first spoke in the House of Commons, he paused for want of words, and could only stutter and stammer. "What future promise," it was asked, "was there in that sturdy, bull-necked, red-faced young member for Castle Rising, who looked like the son of a small farmer, and seemed by his gait as though he had been brought up to follow the plough?" It is not

surprising that the brilliant and accomplished Henry St. John (Lord Bolingbroke), whose first speech on the same evening was loudly applauded, laughed at the idea of his old schoolfellow ever becoming his competitor. Yet in spite of this bad beginning, Walpole lived to falsify all these croakings, and to become by practice and painstaking a powerful debater. If ever a man was born with great oratorical powers, and could afford to dispense with all helps to success, it was Lord Chatham. Yet even he, the king of British orators, did not trust to the gifts of which Nature had been so prodigal, but, as we have already seen, labored indefatigably to improve them by study and discipline. As a means of acquiring copiousness of diction and precision in the choice of words, he submitted to a most painful task. He went twice through a large folio dictionary, examining each word attentively, dwelling on its various shades of meaning and modes of construction, thus endeavoring to bring the whole range of our noble and affluent tongue completely under his control. His son, William Pitt, toiled still harder to perfect his natural gifts; and they were so sharpened by ceaseless practice that failure in his case would have been more wonderful than success. According to Lord Stanhope, when he was asked to what he principally ascribed the two qualities for which his eloquence was conspicuous,—namely, the lucid order of his reasonings and the ready choice of his words, he answered that “he believed he owed the former to an early study of the Aristotelian logic, and the latter to his father’s practice of making him every day, after reading over to himself some passage in the classics, translate it aloud and continuously into English prose.” Not only did these rhetorical exercises receive a large share

of his attention, but he was assiduous in his efforts to cultivate and improve his powers of elocution. By long practice he was able at last "to pour forth a long succession of round and stately periods without premeditation, without ever repeating a word, in a voice of silver clearness, and with a pronunciation so articulate that not a letter was slurred over." "Probably no man of genius since the days of Cicero," says Professor Goodrich, "has ever submitted to an equal amount of drudgery."

Of the silver-tongued Murray,—“the great Lord Mansfield,” as he was called in his own time,—him whose words “dropped manna,” who “spoke roses,” it was said by Bishop Hurd, that though his powers of genius and invention were confessedly of the first size, yet “he almost owed less to them than to the diligent and studious cultivation of his judgment.” Distinguished at school more for his excellence in declamation than in any of the other exercises, he, nevertheless, spared no pains to improve his natural gifts, and studied oratory with the utmost zeal and diligence. “Those who look upon him with admiration as the antagonist of Chatham,” says Lord Campbell, “and who would rival his fame, should be undeceived if they suppose that oratorical skill is merely the gift of nature, and should know by what laborious efforts it is acquired.” He read everything that had been written upon the principles of oratory, and familiarized himself with all the great masters of ancient eloquence. He also diligently practiced original composition, and spent much time in translation. Cicero was his favorite writer, and he used to declare that there was not a single oration extant of this great forensic and senatorial orator which he had not translated into English, and, after an interval, according to the best of his

ability, re-translated into Latin. To give him skill in extemporaneous speaking, he joined a debating society at Lincoln's Inn, where the most abstruse legal points were elaborately discussed. For these exercises he prepared himself beforehand so thoroughly and minutely, that his notes proved of great service to him afterward, both at the bar and on the bench. Mastering in succession ethics, the Roman civil law, international law, the feudal law, and the English municipal law, he still found time, amid all these multifarious and severe studies, to attend to his oratorical exercises, and even, as Boswell expresses it, to "drink champagne with the wits," and cultivate elegant literature. Among his early acquaintances was Alexander Pope, who was struck with admiration by his rare accomplishments, and, above all, by the silvery tones of his voice, which was one of the most noticeable peculiarities of his subtle and insinuating eloquence. It is related that one day, a gay Templar having unceremoniously entered his room, young Murray was surprised in the act of practicing oratory before a glass, while the poet sat by in the character of an instructor. Such were the toils of one of those "*born orators*," who are vulgarly supposed to be able to dispense with labor. Who does not see that it was by intense study and self-discipline that Mansfield acquired his masterly art of putting things,—that art which, as Lord Ashburton said, "made it exceedingly difficult to answer him when he was wrong, and impossible when he was right."

That Burke, with all his transcendent genius, was a prodigious worker, no other proof is required than his works themselves. "The immense labor which he bestowed upon all he did," says an able writer, "was his constant

boast. He disclaimed superior talent, and always appealed to his superior industry. . . . By incessant labor he could at last soar at any moment to his highest elevation, as though it had been his natural level. His innate genius was wonderful, but he improved it to the uttermost. By reading and observation he fed his rich imagination; to books he owed his vast and varied knowledge; from his extensive acquaintance with literature he derived his inexhaustible command of words; through his habits of incessant thought he was enabled to draw the inferences which have won for him the renown of being the most sagacious of politicians; and by the incessant practice of composition he learned to embody his conclusions in a style more grandly beautiful than has ever been reached by any other Englishman with either the tongue or the pen."

So great and so long continued are the labors necessary to make an orator that it is probable there never was a successful speaker who did not acquire his mastery by the constant torment of his hearers. Charles James Fox acquired such skill and readiness in speaking, that he could begin at full speed, and roll on for hours without fatiguing himself or his audience. His mind was so richly supplied with knowledge, and so charged with intellectual heat, that it needed but collision with other minds to flash instantaneously into light. But even *his* talents had been gradually developed by practice. He made it a point to speak every night in Parliament, for his own improvement; and we are told by Lord Holland, his nephew, that in whatever employment or even diversion he was engaged,—whether dress, cards, theatricals, or dinner,—he would exercise his faculties with wonderful assiduity and attention till he had reached the degree of perfection he aimed at.

Canning was almost equally laborious in his efforts to perfect himself in the oratorical art. When he was about to make an important speech, his whole mind was absorbed in it for two or three days beforehand. "He spared no labor," we are told, "either in obtaining or in arranging his materials. He always drew up a paper (which he used in the House), with the heads, in their order, of the several topics on which he meant to touch, and these heads were numbered, and the numbers *sometimes extended to four or five hundred.*" Minute points of accuracy and finish, which many other orators would have disdained to look after, received his sedulous and careful attention. The severity of Curran's oratorical training reminds one of that of the old Greeks. Rarely has so great an advocate been made out of such unpromising materials. Small in stature, with no feature but a sparkling eye to redeem his mean appearance; with a harsh voice, a hasty articulation, and an awkward manner; known at school as "stuttering Jack Curran," and in a debating society to which he belonged as "Orator Mum," on account of a failure in his first speech; he resolved, nevertheless, to overcome all these disadvantages: and overcome them he did so completely, that they almost passed out of men's recollections. To gain a stock of ideas, he spent his morning "in reading even to exhaustion," and gave the rest of the day to literary studies. A portion of his time was given to the classics, of which he became passionately enamored,—especially of Virgil. He carried a copy of the latter always in his pocket, and, during a storm at sea, his biographer found him crying over the fate of the unhappy Dido, when every other person on board would have seen Dido hung up at the yard-

arm with indifference. He made himself familiar with the whole range of English literature, and not only learned to speak French like a native, but read every eminent author in that language. While pursuing these studies with indefatigable zeal, he was unremitting in his efforts to perfect himself as a speaker. Constantly on the watch against bad habits, he practiced daily before a glass, reciting passages from the best English orators and authors. Speaking often in debating-clubs, in spite of the laughter which his early failure provoked, he at last surmounted every obstacle. "He turned his shrill and stumbling brogue into a flexible, sustained, and finely-modulated voice; his action became free and forcible; and he acquired perfect readiness in thinking on his legs,"—in a word, he became one of the most eloquent and powerful forensic advocates that the world has seen.

Erskine, Brougham, Pulteney, Grattan, Gladstone,—all the leading orators of Great Britain, whatever their genius,—labored with equal diligence to perfect themselves in the art of speaking. The same industry,—as could easily be shown, had we space for examples,—has distinguished the most celebrated French orators. Count Montalembert, one of the most eloquent Frenchmen of the present century, when he was attending school at La-Roche, Guyon, in 1827, wrote thus to a friend, at the age of seventeen, concerning his oratorical exercises: "You would laugh heartily, my dear friend, if you could but see me in one of my rambles, whilst I follow one of my favorite pursuits,—declamation. By times, in the depths of the woods, I begin an extempore philippic against the cabinet ministers; and all at once, thanks to my near-sightedness, I find myself face to face with some wood-

cutter or peasant girl, who stares at me in amazement, and probably looks upon me as a madman just escaped from a Bedlam. So, quite ashamed of myself, I take to my heels; and once more set to work at gesticulating and declaiming."

The orators of America are no exception to the rule touching the price of excellence. Not one of them, whose biography has been given to the public, has found the road to success "a primrose path of dalliance." We have many fifth-rate speakers who, having boundless confidence in their native gifts, scorn the drudgery of a long apprenticeship to their art, and trust on each occasion, not to a careful preparation, but to "the inspiration of the hour," confident that they will find something to say on their themes, when they have "fairly warmed up to them." But no American orator whom the people flock to hear, relies on the inspiration of the occasion, unless it is strengthened and intensified by that surer, deeper, and more trustworthy inspiration which comes from years of self-culture and from conscientious preparation for each oratorical effort. The half-educated young lawyer or representative to the legislature may dream over the fancied possession of intuitive powers which he never displays; but those who have entered the arena and engaged in the contest, know that mental vigor can come only from discipline, and skill from persevering practice.

If there is one American orator more than another, who might be supposed to have derived his inspiration from his own "heaven-born genius" and the excitement of the hour, rather than from hard study, and who seemed able to embody fervid feelings in vivid and glowing language without the slightest effort, it was Henry



Clay. But though endowed with the greatest natural gifts, he was no exception to the rule that *orator fit*. He attributed his success not to sudden illuminations while speaking, but mainly to the fact that he began at the age of twenty-seven, and for years continued the practice of daily reading and speaking upon the contents of some historical or scientific book. "These off-hand efforts," he says, "were sometimes made in a cornfield, at others in the forest, and not unfrequently in some distant barn, with the horse and ox for my auditors. It is to this early practice in the great art of all arts, that I am indebted for the primary and leading impulses that stimulated me forward, and shaped and moulded my subsequent entire destiny. Improve, then, young gentlemen, the superior advantages you here enjoy. Let not a day pass without exercising your powers of speech." We have already seen what efforts Pinkney and Wirt made to perfect their oratorical styles. The latter, with all his fluency and constant experience in debate, would never speak, if he could help it, without the most laborious preparation; and for extemporaneous after-dinner speeches, in particular, he had a mortal horror. He was a diligent student of literature as well as the law,—especially of Bacon, Boyle, Hooker, Locke, and the other fathers of English literature, among the moderns, and among the ancients, of Quintilian, Seneca, and Horace; and a pocket edition of the latter poet, well thumbed and marked, was his constant companion upon his journeys. "He was always," says one who knew him, "a man of labor; occasionally of most intense and unremitting labor. He was the most *improving* man, also, I ever knew; for I can truly say that I never heard him speak after any length

of time, without being surprised and delighted at his improvement, both in manner and substance." In a letter to a young law-student, he gives this advice: "I would commit to memory and recite *à la mode de Garrick*, the finest parts of Shakspeare, to tune the voice by cultivating all the varieties of its melody, to give the muscles of the face all their motion and expression, and to acquire an habitual use and gracefulness of gesture and command of the stronger passions of the soul. I would recite my own compositions, and compose them for recitation; I would address my own recitations to trees and stones, and falling streams, if I could not get a living audience, and blush not even if I were caught at it."

Daniel Webster was a prodigy of physical and intellectual endowment; but his greatest gift was a prodigious capacity for hard work. Far from furnishing encouragement to those who trust to their inborn powers of oratory, he furnishes one of the most striking of the thousand illustrations of the truth that the greatest genius, like the richest soil, yields its choicest fruits only to the most careful tillage. He told Senator Fessenden that the most admired figures and illustrations in his speeches, which were supposed to have been thrown off in the excitement of the moment, were, like the "hoarded repartees" and cut-and-dry impromptus of Sheridan, the result of previous study and meditation. On one occasion he told, with extraordinary effect, an anecdote which he had kept pigeon-holed in the cells of his brain for fourteen years, waiting for an opportunity to use it. The vivid and picturesque passage on the greatness and power of England,—than which neither Burke nor Chatham ever conceived anything more brilliant,—was conceived and wrought out

years before it was delivered, while its author was standing in the citadel at Quebec, listening to the drum-beats that summoned the British soldiers to their posts. Mr. Webster once told his friend Peter Harvey that his great speech in reply to Hayne, which was generally supposed to have been delivered without preparation, had been substantially prepared long before, for another but not dissimilar occasion, so that when he was called upon suddenly to defend the honor of New England against the fiery Carolinian's attacks, he had only to turn to his "notes tucked away in a pigeon-hole," and refresh his memory with his former well-weighed arguments and glowing periods. As he himself said, he had only to reach out for a thunderbolt, and hurl it at him. "If Hayne had tried," he said, "to make a speech to fit my notes, he could not have hit it better. No man is inspired by the occasion; I never was." At another time, being questioned by a young clergyman about his speeches which were delivered upon the spur of the moment, Mr. Webster opened his large eyes, with apparent surprise, and exclaimed, "Young man, *there is no such thing as extemporaneous acquisition!*" "The word 'acquisition,'" remarks Mr. Harvey, "was exceedingly well chosen. Mr. Webster knew that there was extemporaneous speaking every day. What he evidently intended to convey was, that knowledge could not be acquired without study; that it did not come by inspiration or by accident." Even in writing a brief letter, or note of presentation in a volume, he was fastidious in his choice of words and phrases, trying different forms of expression again and again before he could satisfy his severe and exacting taste.

Edward Everett, the most scholarly of all our public

speakers, was unwearied in his efforts to improve his oratorical talents. Not only did he write-out his speeches with the most fastidious care, but he took great pains to perfect his gestures and the mechanism of his voice. Persons who knew him well, say that even till he was sixty years old, you might have heard from his library, in the hush of evening, the low tones of familiar talk in which he was practicing his utterances for the platform. Of course, it is possible, as that speaker did latterly, to carry this too far. We would counsel no person to waste his vitality in the study of petty effects, as Everett did when he pressed his handkerchief to his eyes so many hundred times at precisely the same point in his eulogy on Washington; or when he wrote to a friend and asked whether, if, in a certain passage in a lecture which he was about to give, he should put his finger into a tumbler of water, and allow the water to trickle off drop by drop, it would produce an effect on the audience. Tricks like these are too transparent, and are not to be confounded with the study of natural and appropriate gestures. Everett was the last of the artificial school of orators who practiced them, and even he, with all his splendid rhetoric, lived to see the wane of his artificial power before the hard sense and sturdy realism of the nineteenth century.

In nine cases out of ten, persons who object to elocutionary studies and exercises, are thinking not of the legitimate results of such a training, but of extreme cases like that of this great rhetorician. It is not so much to elocutionary skill that they object, as to the artistic air which kills everything,—to a manner perfectly shaped by conscious skill and regulation. There are few who will

not agree with them that if a speaker so trained gets to be absolutely faultless, that is about the greatest fault possible, and that, after such an exhibition, it is even refreshing, as Dr. Bushnell says, "to imagine the great 'babbling' at Athens jerking out his grand periods, and stammering his thunder in a way so uncouth as to become a little contemptible to himself." Far preferable to the over-finished and artificial oratory of Everett, who had mastered every art of elocution but that of concealing art, was the more natural and spontaneous, though at times bizarre and eccentric, oratory of Rufus Choate. The most accomplished advocate of America, he was a splendid illustration of what laborious culture and systematic self-training can do. Never, for a moment, did he think of trusting to native genius or the inspiration of the occasion in his speaking. Forensic eloquence was the study of his life, and for forty years he let no day pass without an effort to perfect himself in the art of addressing his fellow-men. Far from sneering, as so many do, at the teachings of the elocutionist, he said to one of his students,—"*Elocutionary training I most highly approve of; I would go to an elocutionist myself, if I could get time. . . . I have always, even before I first went to Congress, practiced daily a sort of elocutionary culture, combined with a culture of the emotional nature.*" In the symmetry of his training, and the incessant zeal with which he strove to develop, invigorate, and discipline every faculty of mind and body, he reminds us of the ancient Greeks. Of no man can it be more truly said that his genius was mainly "science in disguise."

Of all the living pulpit orators of America, Henry Ward Beecher is confessedly one of the most brilliant.

The son of a great pulpit orator, endowed with the rarest and most versatile abilities, he, if any man could do so, might dispense, one would suppose, with a tedious and protracted training in the art of speaking. But what do we find to have been his education? Did he shun the professors of elocution, believing, as do so many of his brethren, that oratory, like Dogberry's reading and writing, comes by nature? No, he placed himself, when at college, under a skillful teacher, and for three years was drilled incessantly, he says, in posturing, gesture, and voice-culture. Luckily he had a teacher who had no faith in Procrustean systems, and never cared to put "Prof. Lovell, his  $\times$  mark" on his pupils, but simply helped his pupils to discover and bring out what was in themselves. Later, at the theological seminary, Mr. Beecher continued his drill. There was a large grove between the seminary and his father's house, and it was the habit, he tells us, of his brother Charles and himself, with one or two others, to make the night, and even the day, hideous with their voices, as they passed backward and forward through the wood, exploding all the vowels from the bottom to the very top of their voices. And what was the result of all these exercises? Was it a stiff, cramped style of speaking, or was it *omnis effusus labor*? "The drill that I underwent," says this many-sided orator, "produced, not a rhetorical manner, but a flexible instrument, that accommodated itself readily to every kind of thought and every shape of feeling, and obeyed the inward will in the outward realization of the results of rules and regulations."

How signally do the examples we have cited illustrate the truth of Sir Joshua Reynolds's remark that the effects of genius must have their causes, and that these may, for

the most part, be analyzed, digested, and copied, though sometimes they may be too subtle to be reduced to a written art! They prove conclusively, we think, that the great orators, of ancient and modern times, have trusted, not to native endowments, but to careful culture; that it was to the *infinitus labor et quotidiana meditatio*, of which Tacitus speaks, that they owed their triumphs; that, marvellous as were their gifts, they were less than the ignorant rated them; and that even the mightiest, the elect natures, that are supposed to be above all rules, condescended to methods by which the humblest may profit.

In answer to all this, some one may cite the "natural oratory" of Abraham Lincoln, who owed as little to books and teachers as perhaps any man of equal eminence. But even he did not win his successes without toil. His finest effort, the immortal Gettysburg speech,—which, brief as it is, will be read and remembered long after Edward Everett's ambitious oration, which occupied hours in the delivery, shall have been forgotten,—was prepared with extraordinary care. According to the statement of Mr. Noah Brooks, his friend, it was written and re-written many times. The same conscientious painstaking, even in the veriest trifles, distinguishes all the great actors and public readers who have won the ear of the public. It is said that a person once heard a man crying "murder," in the room under his own, in a hotel, for two hours in succession. Upon inquiry, he found that it was Macready, the tragedian, practicing on a word, to get the right agonized tone. A gentleman in Chicago,\* who has had occasion to learn some of the secrets of Charlotte Cushman's mastery of her art, tells us that she never, in her public readings, read

\* Mr. George B. Carpenter.

the pettiest anecdote, or even a few verses, without the most careful and laborious preparation. On one occasion, in Chicago, she prepared herself for an encore by selecting a comic negro anecdote that met her eye, which filled about twenty lines in a newspaper. For three or four days she read and re-read this story in her private room, trying the effect of different styles of recitation, now emphasizing this word, now that, now pitching her voice to one key and now to another, till she had discovered what seemed to be the best way to bring out its ludicrous features into the boldest relief. When Rachel was about to play in Paris a scene from "Louise de Lignerolle," she spent three hours in studying it, though it comprised but thirty lines. Every word was rehearsed in all possible ways, to discover its "truest and most penetrating utterance." So true is it that the greatest geniuses in every art invariably labor at that art far more than all others, because *their very genius shows them the necessity and value of such labor*, and thus helps them to persist in it! So true is it that whether in oratory, poetry, music, painting, or sculpture, no artist attains to that excellence in which effort concealed steals the charm of intuition, unless he is *totus in illo*,—unless, as Bulwer says, "all which is observed in ordinary life, as well as all which is observed in severer moments, contributes to the special faculties which the art itself has called into an energy so habitually pervading the whole intellectual constitution, that the mind is scarcely conscious of the work which it undergoes"! The prodigies of genius, so far from being favored by nature and allowed to dispense with toil, would probably, as Professor Channing, of Harvard, says, show to us, their short-sighted worshipers, were they able to



reveal to us the mystery of their growth, a far more thorough course of education, a more strict, though perhaps unconscious obedience to principles, than even the most dependent of their brethren have been subjected to.

We say, then, to the reader,—Would you wield the mighty power,—the thunderbolt,—of oratory? Listen to the words of Salvini, the great actor, to the pupils in his art: “Above all, study,—*study*,—*STUDY*. All the genius in the world will not help you along with any art, unless you become a hard student. It has taken me *years* to master a single part.” The same performer is now occupied with the role of King Lear, which he says it will take him two years to study thoroughly. To speak as Nature prompts,—to give utterance to one’s thoughts and feelings in appropriate tones and with appropriate gestures,—*seems* too easy to require much labor. But, as it has been well observed, simple as truth is, it is almost always as difficult to attain as it is triumphant when acquired. It is said that one day a youth walked into the studio of Michael Angelo in his absence, and with a bit of chalk dashed a slight line on the wall. When the great master returned, he did not need to ask who had visited him; the little line, as true as a ray from heaven, was the unmistakable autograph of Raphael. Doubtless in every profession there are men who leap to the heights without much training; but we know not how much higher they might have risen, had they added all possible acquired ability to the gifts of nature. “Where natural logic prevails not,” says Sir Thomas Browne, “artificial too often faileth; but when industry builds upon nature, we may expect Pyramids.”

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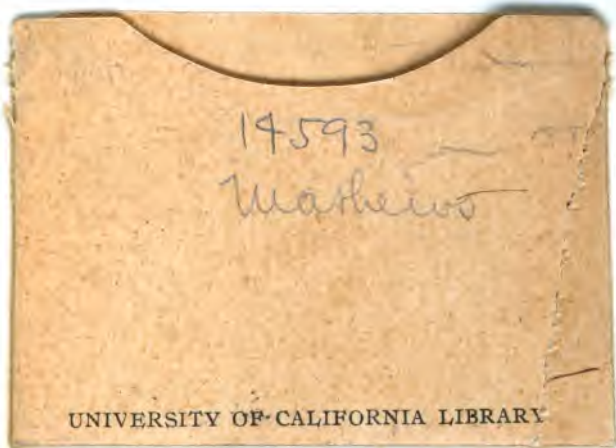
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